

Internal Bulletin 84

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INTRODUCTION TO IB 84:

This IB contains a number of contributions which have been written as a result of the factional state of the movement.

Two of these are resignation letters. They are included not because they are unusual - on the contrary in today's WSL they are the norm - but because each represents something significant.

Cde Mckelvie was an NC member and is someone steeped in day to day serious and successful work in his trade union and MP organisations.

Cde. Lovell is an experienced revolutionary in an important labour movement position, who had recently been attracted to the WSL. His revulsion at what he found inside the movement is the only serious response which a class struggle militant could have. At one time a number of us felt that mass recruitment of such cdes. was the only thing which could save our organisation from tearing itself apart. We were wrong - they would have reacted like cde. Lovell did and probably far more quickly. The solution to the movement's problems lies with those of us who are still members.

The third document is a response to the systematic slanders and lies being circulated round the movement (by the Carolan/Kinnell/Hill leadership) about those of us who have tried to introduce some sanity into the organisation.

The final document speaks for itself.

Parsons 7/3/84

"There are some people who like faction fights; we had people in all the factions who were really never awake until the factional fight started bubbling. Then they became alive. When it came to doing some constructive work - demonstrations, picket lines, building up a wider circulation for the press, helping class-war prisoners - they had no interest in the prosaic routine. But merely announce the holding of a factional caucus meeting, and they would be there every time - in the front seats.

There are certain abnormal types in all movements. We had plenty of them. I could deliver several biographical lectures on the single subject, 'professional faction fighters I have known'. Such people can never lead a political movement."

Cannon, from 'The History of American Trotskyism'

The task of the WSL is to build the nucleus of what will become a future revolutionary Party.

Such a Party would be effectively such only if it were 100s of 1000s strong. Of necessity it would be an organisation encompassing a range of views - some no doubt not consciously Trotskyist - but based firmly upon the independent class analysis embodied in the methods of Trotskyism.

Political differences would have to co-exist in a comradely atmosphere of education, discussion, and adherence to decisions taken.

Yet the leadership of the WSL is incapable of building an organisation of a few hundred cadres encompassing minor political differences - differences that are real enough, but objectively of minimal importance.

Instead we have seen, and continue to see, a beanfeast of factionalism, squabbling, hysteria, and resultant sectarianism. Paranoia has apparently crept in too - witness the laughable characterisation of Parsons and other comrades concerned about the state of the WSL as (not for the first time) "Parsons and ... his faction", by Cde Kinnell in his document on the USFI for the 19/11/83 NC (reprinted in IB 77).

In fact both sides of the current League leadership assume without question that comrades who hold different views from them in the organisation must also operate in the same cliquish, apolitical manner as themselves.

It is true that the legacy of the post-war boom on the one hand and the extension and consolidation of Stalinism on the other are the material bases for such behaviour - behaviour that has been endemic throughout the history of post-war Trotskyism. But instead of tackling the problem, the WSL leadership has succumbed to it. Factionalism is the accepted modus operandi.

The current League leadership holds the responsibility for that within our own organisation. Whatever the faults and excessive over-reactions of others, it is the Carolan-Kinnell-Hill leadership who are primarily to blame. Even if one accepts their own notion (and I don't accept it) that they have been the unwitting victims of destructive oppositionists, then they have quite clearly failed to come to grips with the problem in any constructive manner.

In fact, if one looks back over the past 10 years of the old I-CL and new WSL, that same leadership has been through similar, though less destructive, experiences before.

It is a leadership proven to be quite incapable of co-existing with other revolutionaries who hold a different point of view (even marginally different) within the same revolutionary organisation.

Cont

We can see this process:

- a) firstly with the comrades of the former IS Left Faction, the majority of whom left the I-CL fusion to form the 'Workers Power' group c.1976.
- b) then with the 'Chartist' comrades who left the Broad Groups soon after the S... 's foundation c. 1979.
- c) and more recently with the members of the 'Internationalist Faction' who have recently attempted to form the WIL.
- d) and of course currently with the rest of the old WSL leadership, in the ongoing battle since fusion.

Whereas the Cliff leadership in IS in the early '70s dealt with its internal political opponents by expelling one group after another, starting with Workers Fight in 1971, the Carolan-Kinnell-Hill leadership of the I-CL/WSL have firstly isolated and then succeeded in driving out those they identify as a threat to their political hegemony. They can then attach the blame to those they have systematically chosen to attack.

Of course IS and the I-CL/WSL were very different organisations, even in their conceptions; expelling opponents was okay within the bureaucratic-centralist IS. A much more subtle method needed to be found in the I-CL/WSL with its facade of democracy. In reality both methods are essentially the same, with expulsions at least having the added bonus of being honest.

All this is not of course to say that the varied groups that the I-CL/WSL leadership has succeeded in first isolating and then driving out were or are politically correct. Far from it. However their political development at the time and subsequently was in many ways determined, not by themselves, but in reaction to the factional manoeuvring of the Carolan-Kinnell-Hill leadership. What may have started out as a slight nuance of a disagreement has become, in response to attacks both exaggerated and completely out of proportion, a major policy difference resulting in many documents worth of bile. I believe that the Falklands / Malvinas issues, and the 'debate' about Federalism in Ireland are classic examples of this.

With the partial exception of the Chartists, the oppositionists overreacted. They allowed their sense of injured pride to blur their analyses; they were driven to shore up the often minor points of difference with false or absurdly-constructed criticisms; and they subsequently regressed further into sectarian isolation ('Workers Power' and the disintegrating 'WIL' being prime examples).

The leadership's method of political operation - appeals to old loyalties, hours spent haranguing and manoeuvring on the phone, raising red herrings to denigrate opponents' arguments, withdrawing from responsibilities for organising the education and political activity of members - has produced false polarisations which the 'oppositionists' have been too immature to avoid legitimising caricature-fashion.

The leadership has also invoked another method to 'help' things along - acts of provocation. The classic example of this must surely be over 'convergence' (of the Broad Groups and League). In all honesty this should have been on the agenda a couple of years ago (after the abject failure of the leadership to implement the Broad Group turn); it was raised in passing by the Internationalist faction before their departure, with no response. So why do the Carolan puppets in Glasgow raise it now? And why does the leadership jump at the opportunity? (after all most Branch resolutions are completely ignored, or not acted upon, by the EC.)

A number of points flow from the above observations on the mode of operation of the I-CL/WSL.

I have come to the conclusion that under the Carolan-Kinnell-Hill leadership (or indeed its mirror image in the Smith/Jones faction), the WSL is incapable of building a nucleus of revolutionaries other than as parrots to the leadership.

Continued over

The points of difference such as they are in the present organisation are miniscule to those as would be found within a rebuilt IVth International, or indeed within a significant revolutionary organisation in Britain alone. Or indeed as should be found within a healthy revolutionary caucus such as the WSL might have become.

It has been said since my resignation that I do not believe in the need to build a revolutionary Party. Or, more cynically still, that I go through 'these phases'. Let me say quite clearly; I do believe in the need to build such a Party, but I also believe that the WSL will not be it.

My observations also mean that the WSL will continue to remain in virtual isolation as a national Trotskyist grouping. After all, Trotskyists internationally of all hues don't share all the same viewpoints as our current national leadership. As Kinnell continues to say, "Well they are all awful". With such a narrow pre-conception, exhibiting most clearly an inability and unwillingness to tolerate anything other than their own perfect wisdoms, how could the WSL coexist within any international organisation?

And the WSL itself will continue to remain an intolerant, disorganised office - briefly described above, and better described: (correctly as bureaucratic-centralist) by Cde Oliver in his own articles in 1964.

Not only will the WSL remain incapable of building its forces, but politically it is regressing, and will continue to do so.

It is of course significant that the I-CL was capable of successfully cooperating on single-issue campaigns with other non-revolutionary forces on the left in the 1979-81 period (the Democracy campaign was the best example). Of more significance was its incapability then, as now, of cooperating with other Trotskyists and building an organisation.

This has left the WSL, as the soft left scuttle behind the Kinnock-Hattersley bandwagon, more isolated than it need have been had the leadership been capable of pushing through the Broad Group turn successfully. If the WSL leadership had been prepared to subordinate its irrelevant factional battles to a genuine desire to educate and organise its own members, and thus draw other revolutionaries into the League, the situation might now have been quite different.

It is not enough to say that other revolutionary groups are experiencing a downturn in their fortunes at the moment as well.

The I-CL/WSL stood in a unique position to fill the vacuum previously occupied by the SLL in the late '50s / early '60s, and subsequently by the IS in the late '60s / early '70s. Correct lessons were drawn by both the old I-CL and the old WSL from both these experiences, lessons which should have been good enough to carry out similar turns as the SLL and IS did, but this time with long-term success.

As the hard left, disillusioned with Kinnock/Hattersley, look for a lead, the WSL should have been ideally placed to give it.

The WSL has singularly failed. It has embarked on the self-same path of inward-looking sectarianism as the SLL and IS did before it, without even having made the outward turns those organisations did so (relatively) successfully. The WSL is today a withered faction-ridden sect, even less capable now than it was a couple of years ago of any positive contribution towards the revolutionary development of our class.

Indeed the WSL is now withdrawing even further into an 'holier-than-thou' sectarian isolation. This has already been documented by Cde Oliver over our failure to respond to the massive struggles generated by CND and Greenham in particular.

Witness now the article on Councillors produced for the Broad Group AGM and reprinted (why?) in the pages of the paper. The article graphically illustrates Kinnell's incapability for drawing out the positive lessons of what may well, arguably, be overall negative experiences. The conclusions are almost entirely negative, the commentary carping, the alternative proposals absent. And this in a situation where the WSL cannot afford to stand outside. Witness too the degeneration of the paper under Carolan's editorship. The star prize there must surely be awarded to the 'Letters', whose final coffin nail

was hammered in by SC's letter from Glasgow just before Xmas. League members generally managed to work out it was taking the piss out of someone (as to whom we weren't sure - was it the SL? Was it the 'Faction'?). But does the editor and the letter's author not realise that some working class militants read the paper as well? Or, should I say, used to buy it.

The Women's Page (sick) has become a farce. Ah, Comrades will say, but none of our women cdes will write for it. Doesn't that beg the question why? The answer is of course obvious - the WSL is even more uninhabitable for working class women than it is for men. Similarly one of the paper's previously better points - its coverage of lesbian and gay issues - has now virtually disappeared.

These points in themselves aren't of course sufficient in themselves to warrant my conclusions. They are merely symptomatic of the League's drift back into the sectarian fog from which it emerged during the '60s and '70s, a drift which I believe stems from the leadership's incapability of operating as part of a collective revolutionary leadership.

What could be done?

The immediate answer that will spring to many comrades' lips will be:

"Fight to change the situation. Fight for a new leadership."

But what in practice would this mean?

It would have to involve comrades with a similar critique as myself forming a faction for the express purpose of replacing the leadership. If such a course were possible, then it would lead to further faction-fighting.

Victory would be highly unlikely: the current leadership has the time, the inclination, the lack of responsibilities within the class, and even the money (ours!) to continually fuel the factional fires, to denigrate the opposition, so isolating opponents. After all, they've managed to do exactly that with all previous oppositions.

At the very best, if such a faction were to win the majority of the organisation to its point of view, it would mean nothing more than an uneasy truce with Carolan-Kinnell-Hill waiting to attack at every opportunity. That is not unfair on those comrades, it is a matter of historical and current-day fact. There is nothing to suggest that this would substantially change.

As an alternative, a number of comrades including myself during the course of 1982/83 decided to try and get a good number of people of similar persuasion elected to the NC to try and exert a steadying influence over the factions within the leadership. Instead of accepting us for what we were, comrades concerned at the trajectory of the League, the leadership (on both sides) was incapable of treating us as anything but an "undeclared faction". When we agreed and voted together on a particular point, we were condemned for being one; when we disagreed and voted differently on another point, we were condemned for being an unprincipled one! Either way they were (and still are) incapable of relating to us as militants wanting to build the WSL; instead seeing us through the glasses of hardened factionalists. Petty point-scoring dominated the motives and actions of the faction leaders throughout my time on the NC.

This experience left the comrades concerned demoralised and even more keenly aware of the desperate state of the organisation.

The comrades, myself included, therefore retreated into a second, more common, response throughout the whole WSL.

That is to say:

"We don't like what's going on; let's ignore it as best we can, continue to do (often good) local work, and hope the situation resolves itself."

The justification goes something like this:

Of all the revolutionary forces within Britain, the WSL is undoubtedly politically the best. It on the one hand avoids lunacies of sects like the WRP, RCP, WP, WIL etc; on the other it avoids the pessimistic and apolitical economism of the SWP;

it avoids too the chameleon-like zigzags of the SL in its continuing adaption to the hostile twin forces of reformism and Stalinism (the course already chartered more competently by the RSL).

So politically its the best thing around. If you fundamentally agree with the need to build a revolutionary Party free of sectarianism on the one hand (or at least freer of it than the other contenders), and free of 'Pabloism' on the other, then, whatever the WSL's faults, the conclusion can only be to remain in it and pray that it somehow recovers from its present terminal condition.

But that point of view:

- a) Treats the current factional situation as an aberration, rather than seeing it as a complement to the mode of operation of the WSL leadership.
- b) Allows that leadership to get away with isolating and marginalising those who hold a different point of view about the WSL's development. You agree to your own submission.
- c) Is essentially a negative argument anyway. Instead of reacting positively to the situation by either trying to resolve it, or, if you don't think it can be resolved, taking the appropriate step, it is to throw your hands up in the air and hope for the best.

Well comrades, the best so far is a worsening of the situation.
There is no magical solution.

The membership is more demoralised than ever, and the leadership (on both sides) is both incapable and unwilling to do anything about it.

No influx of militants into either the League or the Broad Groups is going to change a method of operation established over 2 decades in the I-CL and its predecessors.

Is the League in any case capable of attracting such militants in any numbers? Its own internal strife is reflected in its own external appearance - in the dire state of the paper, the finances, the general morale and disorganisation. The WSL is not an attractive outfit, even if some of its political ideas continue to be so.

Even suppose, against the odds, that such militants were attracted. Either, they would soon leave upon discovering the state of play, or, they would be sucked into the factionalism themselves, not least as both factions within the leadership undoubtedly see such new recruits as factional footballs.

Where does that leave us?

For me, following from point c) above, I've drawn a positive conclusion and left. I feel a great sadness - years of hard work and money down the drain - but, to be honest not a great loss.

My trade union and MP work isn't affected; I continue to maintain the same political relationships as before, though in a different form.

Locally the B group is gradually beginning to take off. That isn't an alternative to building a revolutionary Party - there can be no alternative - its a way of organising politically for the present moment. It may or may not result in the emergence of a regroupment of the revolutionary forces in Britain. That depends upon what happens within it. There are certainly more options and opportunities within that though than within the WSL.

Yes, we are right to argue for the building of the revolutionary Party. But we are quite wrong to pretend that the WSL has any role to play in that process.

26th February 1984

RESIGNATION LETTER / LOVELL

Dear Comrades,

I feel I must offer my resignation from the League. Which may be surprising after such a short stay, but ofcourse it has been nearly six months in which I have been working closely with comrades.

Can I outline the reasons for my decesion. I was attracted to SX and therefore the League by the stance the paper was taking in the labour movement, and the work and approach (Lovell's emphasis) of cmd's around the paper in the Coventry area. In addition, as a Marxist-Leninist I recognised the need for a revolutionary party and was concious of the limitations of my work as an individual. Which enforced both a Coventry-centric and British-centric area of activity.

The initial evidence I surveyed seemed to point to the League being the correct forum for the building of a revolutionary force in Britain and perhaps internationally.

However, increasingly I became uneasy and finally convinced that the internal problems of the organisation does not provide the basis on which there can be any potential growth or healthy development. The two final factors being the last branch discussion and the problems it revealed and secondly the contents of Cunliff's IB document, which were about the problems he himself faced.

Of course being new I feel particularly estranged from the internal debates and a longer term membership may have given me the basis to 'sick-it-out'. That is prehaps an individual situation.

Nevertheless, I have now made a decision. I still hope to continue to work with cmd's in the MP etc., but feel that the basis for me joining the League has now disappeared.

Yours fraternally

LOVELL

AN ALTERNATIVE VIEW OF THE FACTIONAL CRISIS

- Parsons

INTRODUCTION:

This document was written in early August of last year (1983). At the time I decided it was not suitable for the Internal Bulletin. However, as the internal situation has got much worse since the completion of the 1983 Conferences I think it is time that the membership had an opportunity to see what I wrote.

The movement continues to decline in numbers, the leading bodies are wracked with factionalism, the membership demoralised. In IB77 Cde. Kinnell says that everything is fine and dandy except for the dead-end factionalists in Coventry and Oxford. On January 7th the NC voted down Cde. Cunliffes proposals that the paper be controlled by an elected Editorial Board. The Carolan/Kinnell/Hill leadership counterposed an EB comprised of the EC. On January 22nd a much depleted EC held an Editorial discussion with only 4 cdes. in attendance and no sign of the Editor. This is not serious politics.

Cde. Cunliffes withdrawal from work on the paper is another nail in the coffin of the fusion. Carolan/Kinnell/Hill are determined to drive out anyone who opposes them. Cde. Carolan in particular is paranoid in relation to those such as myself who have tried to work against factionalism. As the arch-factionalist of the movement he knows that sooner or later he would become one of our main targets as far as criticism is concerned. Some of the lies and slanders he has been circulating have come to our knowledge. It is important therefore that the membership have an alternative view. Cdes. should regard this as Part 1 of a document which will continue with a discription of the post August '83 situation.

Parsons 23.1.84

(1)

Since the second part of our conference the factional situation has continued on our leading bodies. Most NC meetings have involved hysterical shouting matches during which, in my opinion, physical violence seemed a less than remote possibility. During one of these exchanges, a cde. raising mild objections to the anarchic editorial procedure of the paper was branded by Kinnell as a Libiyan agent, and more reently the same cde. was accused of being the most factional person in the movement, having no politics, no principle, having cynically distributed a document to the last conference with which he didn't agree (although he wrote it) and having made an intervention into the last conference which was in the opinion of one of his accusers, "the most factional I have seen in 24 years in the Trotskyist movement."

The purpose of this document is to place before the movement the record and objectives of the above accused (myself) within the development of the league over the last months. In particular I want to refute once and for all the slander that myself and others who might share my attitudes are "fence-sitters" or as Carolan remarked at the last NC "political outsiders for Cde. Smit h's faction".

If much of what is written here seems subjective and personal then I'm afraid that is the result of the tensions existing in our movement. It is also the case that I have avoided associating like-minded cdes. with all the views outlined here. We are not a faction but at most a loose network (if one can even go so far as that) of cdes. with quite different views on some questions who are being pushed together, forced to exchange ideas and to a certain extent collaborate because of the behaviour of the blocks.

(2)

When the fusion took place I stated several times, and I thought it was generally agreed, that a fraternal open-minded process of discussion would emerge during which the movement would establish a new, higher understanding of it's tasks, a new method which was based on the strong points of each previously existing organisation. Regardless of whose fault it is, this has not been the case.

I welcomed the fusion because I felt that each of the organisations involved were breaking from sectarianism and showed every sign of wishing to go further. I did not generally agree with either organisation, although the willingness of the I-CL to turn fully into MP work seemed to suggest an understanding which the old WSL lacked. It was similarly the case with issues relating to women's oppression, although the WSL record and experience of nursery struggles was something I regarded and still regard as very precious. As far as the Transitional Programme was concerned, I agreed with neither although on balance the old WSL had paid more attention to worker's control. On international work I had no time for the I-CL's record and analysis, much respect for the WSL's attempts and far more agreement with it's analysis of the WTM.

I mention this because I think that it is important to tackle cde. Carolan's conception of political debate within the movement. I believe that both the ICL and WSL traditions were limited and distorted. Each had strengths and weaknesses, insights and blindspots. The fact that each set of ideas had been codified and given physical embodiment in an actual organisation does not make this any less true. The task facing us at the time of the fusion was to transcend the limitations of each movement while not abandoning everything each organisation stood for.

(3)

Cde. Cunliffe has said recently (IB61) that the fusion was badly prepared. I reject this totally. More discussion between two separate traditions would have been pretty pointless. Only by forcing each organisation into one collective effort - mixing the work and thinking at every level - could such discussion be made to work.

The key problem has been one of attitude - an unwillingness to exchange ideas, compromise on lines of action in a fraternal way. More than anything else what has damaged this process has been a lack of respect and trust.

In fact what has taken place has been a stand up fight for control of the movement and the violence of the denunciations the insults, the contempt and hatred are new experiences for me. In the sharpest struggles in the old WSL the situation was never as bad as this.

I have considered whether or not I am looking for an ideal debating atmosphere. Surely cdes. who feel strongly ~~are~~ bound to argue forcefully; then I thought to myself where else have experienced the sort of behaviour we have recently had from some leading cdes.

The answer is, of course, nowhere. One glimpse of this sort of behaviour would be enough for most ordinary people. We should not have to put up with hystiria of the sort cde. Kinnell indulges himself in. Quite frankly my young children are able to exercise more self control than cde. Kinnell seems to be capable of.

This is not to say that we should not be prepared to be insulted on occasion. I have been myself many times but I have always been proud of the fact that many of my political opponents have commented on my honesty. Up until the last NC I have never been called a "factional little shit with no politics". I can only assume that my long struggle is over and I now pose some sort of political threat to someone, but what a way to be taken seriously at last !

(4)

Cdes. might recall that from an early stage in the fused organisation I repeatedly raised the necessity of discussion on the basic issues. I warned the NC time and time again that we were building up for a profound crisis if we refused to listen to the grumblings of discontent at the base of the movement. At that stage it was the EC that blocked discussion, the EC that refused to educate the membership in the principles and methods of the Broad Group tactic and the analysis on which it was based.

Go back to the minutes of the leading bodies and you will find the time when the EC reported to a bewildered NC that there were difficulties and tensions at EC level but we didn't need to know any details, that at every important turn in class struggle agreement had been reached.

At that meeting I argued for an early conference, I argued that the 1982 Summer School should be used for that purpose and that an extended period of pre-conference discussion was needed to bring out problems in the background. Almost 20 NC members agreed with me, but the combined weight of the ex ICL + WSL leaderships ensured our defeat. Who was evading discussion cdes - you or me ?

When the Falklands/Malvinas issue developed I did not sit on the fence. To the best of my ability I tried to ~~mar~~ the issues and voted accordingly. I argued strongly against the Tendency position - after some initial doubts. These initial doubts are important because they reflected the position of many of us at the time. We were unprepared for the war and the issues it threw up we did not possess the ideological capital to deal with the situation automatically.

(5)

The situation in the leading bodies deteriorated rapidly from then on. It reached a low point at the Summer School where a NC meeting half-way through the week almost degenerated into physical violence (between Carolan and Morrow) and in my opinion only survived in any remotely useful form because cde. Oliver took control of the chair and knocked a little sense into the participants.

I was profoundly depressed by the Summer School where there was a great deal of talk on both sides about an impending split. The final straw was the Falklands/Malvinas debate. I was appalled by some cdes. behaviour there and resigned my membership 48 hours later. I withdrew the resignation and decided to do something about the situation.

It seemed absolutely bizarre that an issue as dead as the war in the South Atlantic could jeopardise the fusion. Cde. Oliver approached me and we came to the conclusion that the movement needed to put centrally in its mind the potential strengths which were brought together by our fusion.

He wrote a draft document (IB20) to which I added a couple of short sections towards the end. In the face of a total lack of discussion on anything else in the movement, (* see footnote) The fact that the war was over and that the debate did nothing to clarify the background issues we analysed the Special Conference as a vote and which would solve nothing.

We put a resolution to this effect and it was blocked by a united executive recommendation that it should not even be voted on. Just how many cdes. would have voted for the resolution we don't know but many individuals approached us, said they agreed with us and urged us to take further action to stem the factionalism.

* As a cde pointed out at the Special Conference itself when had the leadership considered holding a national membership meeting on the NHS dispute which was raging at the time.

Our intervention has been characterised as fencesitting. This is a slander. We were in effect the sharpest critics of the way the tendency were conducting themselves. We were saying they were wrong to force a special conference. We were calling them to order. It is true that we did not speak on the actual resolutions at the conference itself. It seemed irrelevant to do so - no one was listening. We had done so - at branch and area debates, we considered the most important role we could play was to reassert the potential of the fusion.

Cde. Carolan makes much of our so-called "fence sitting". and "avoidance of the political issues". By this he means that if one generally agrees with what he is saying you have to accept his method of debate. If you try to raise something different from his view of the world you become 'a political outsider for the faction'. If enough mud has been thrown at you already "he/she has no politics, is a fence-sitter" etc. then it is hoped that cdes. will ignore what you are saying politically or miss the point you are trying to make.

(6)

Cde. Carolan also prides himself on his ability to "guide the political development of the movement". He gets this notion from Cannon and Gerry Healy. In practice this means that whatever Carolan thinks unimportant he ignores.

In July 1982 cde. Cunliffe issued a document which raised the basic issues and politics which Smith/Jones/Cunliffe and their supporters were to raise at this year's conference. Who sought to answer cde. Cunliffe? Was it the political Hill? Was it the political Kinnell? Was it the political Carolan? Unfortunately no, it was not, in fact it was the "factional little shit with no politics." Cde. Cunliffe's attempt to get himself a hearing through "Party Building: A neglected art?" was about as successful as my response to it. These three highly political, dare I say it, principled Bolsheviks, ignored the debate we started then.

Cdes. should go back to IB20 (Sept '82). Ask yourself does my reply to cde. Cunliffe evade the issues? Of course not. Cde. Carolan doesn't know because he has probably not even read Cunliffe's contribution or my reply.

It is a sad fact that Carolan has the same attitude to cdes. as Stalin had to the Pope for "how many divisions does he have" to. "How many votes does he have."

Some months later I asked the centre to re-issue IB20 because I thought it relevant to the debate on the British Perspectives (remember them cdes.?). Of course our democratic centralists have seen fit to ignore this request but more importantly when I rang cde. Carolan and reminded him of Party Building; a neglected art? and my reply he did not remember either document. As we shall see my short lived debate with cde. Cunliffe had a distinct relevance to later events.

(7)

In the period from Sept '82 to Feb '83 a number of us became increasingly dispirited by the conduct of the debates at the NC. Smith, Jones and Cunliffe floundered about somewhat and their positions lacked clarity. Hill, Kinnell, and Carolan responded with vicious denunciations of 'factionalism'.

When the debate on the register erupted I was reasonably clear where I stood. I did not sit on the fence, I argued my position as clearly as I could. When we finally came to vote on the resolutions I voted for both because by that time each had been whittled down to a few clauses and there was between them no difference whatsoever. Cdes. from B'ham both agreed with me but they voted for different resolutions and each abstained on the other. It is a reflection of NC factionalism at the time that despite the identical nature of the resolutions, from which everything contentious had been removed the vote still divided along typical lines. I added a note to the recorded votes to the effect that while I recognised that behind the two resolutions lay quite different conceptions of MP work it seemed unnecessary to have two resolutions saying the same thing on the register. I challenged anyone to prove a difference between them and offered £1.00 to the fund if anyone could. No one has taken up that offer.

When there is a clear difference I vote for one position against the other - If I agree with either - when there is no difference save factional motivation I vote for both. That is not fence sitting that is political maturity.

(8)

When cde. Cunliffe introduced his draft 'British Perspectives which contained conceptions clearly outlined in 'Party Building: A neglected Art?' we were treated to three identical speeches from Carolan, Kinnell and Hill denouncing Cunliffes document and presumably Cunliffe himself as "disloyal".

Cdes. C/K/H instead of concentrating on the issues in the debate chose to drag a red-herring into the centre of the stage - the "sectarian regression" argument. Now I believe that there is something in this "theory" and I have used it myself but in an important respect it confuses the situation. Cde. Cunliffe was roundly denounced at the NC discussion on the British Perspectives and accused of sectarian regression. I do not believe that he was writing anything that he had not believed all along and more importantly he had gone into print with his ideas some 6 months previously (Party Building: A neglected Art July '82). C/K/H ignored this document at the time and then seemed outraged when Cde Cunliffe's Perspectives document was written with a similar approach.

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It was during these factional exchanges that the "sensible faction" (a joke name culled by cde. Traven) started to emerge.

Much heat, little clarification and an almost impossible atmosphere existed - as well as reports that the EC was inoperable. How were we to respond? Without a calm and fraternal discussion, those of us who were forced to witness the histrionics of the EC members could scarcely contribute to the discussion. We voted on the issues as we each saw fit and made no attempt to get a common political line. We did try collectively to dissipate the heat and return to rational debate. In no way did we sit on the fence on what mattered - the resolutions. What we did do was refuse to be drawn into either camp and more importantly refuse to recognise the debate in those terms.

At no stage did we attempt to organise in a factional way. We were propelled towards each other because we were all prepared to talk to cdes in each camp without screaming at them, denouncing them as responsible for the problems and so on. One of the things we all seemed to agree on was that the debate did not have a great deal to do with what we were doing locally.

At the first part of the conference some of us met briefly and exchanged ideas. We recognised that we had come together because we were concerned by the situation, we did not fully understand it. We were apportioning no blame as yet, we were trying to find a way out. We thought the situation was not going as badly as we feared.

However, something else happened at that conference, something we had not discussed at all. Seeking to contribute to the debate on the international the "factional little shit with no politics" had written a critique of "FI Crisis and Tasks", submitted by the EC. The "factional little shit with no politics" had in fact consulted no-one about his contribution and had expected something in the region of 5 votes for his document. In the event 37 cdes., many of them ex I-CL voted for it. The EC document was rejected and in fact only managed to get 52 votes.

This went parallel with substantial support from the membership for a positive approach to fusion with the SL - something initiated by an entirely separate group of cdes.

It was at this point that Carolan, Kinnell and Hill started to get upset because they feared a revolt in the ranks - they could no longer assume that they had a majority of safe supporters - ready to put up their hands whenever the string was pulled. They also knew that Cunliffe/Jones/Smith etc. were in fact far closer to Parsons on the international than to them.

Clearly there were many people who found a substantial degree of agreement with Parson's general approach and method and in individual discussions it became clear that they linked that method to their concerns over day to day practical work in their localities.

What, in short, was emerging was that a significant group of cdes. did not identify with either of the blocks - politically.

No contact was made by the cdes. of the "sensible faction" between the first and second parts of the conference. One or two conversations between individuals did take place but these could hardly be construed as factionalism.

Meanwhile, some cdes. who lived in the same city realised - independently that they had begun to get something approaching clarity on the terms of the MP debate. We sat down and agreed a general political statement. We were too late to include it in the agenda but we felt we should distribute it anyway - to make our general outlook known.

At the conference we were unable to get into the MP debate to the extent we would have liked - otherwise we would have made our positions clear. However, we were concerned that the composition of the incoming NC would not reflect the real political balance in the movement which we did not assess as being between the three organised blocs. The chosen method of electing the NC forced us to use the only avenue open to us to ensure that a certain number of independents were elected. We called a meeting of those who wanted such a further force on the NC and we drew up a slate. Confident that the blocks would look after their own, we played the system and did very well out of it. If we had been slightly more efficient we would have done better still.

Since the conference Hill, Kinnell and Carolan have become more and more hysterical because they have suffered from our efforts and do not command an automatic majority on every vote.

Was it unprincipled for us to act as we did at the conference? Much has been made of the fact that among the cdes. on our slate were those who voted for, against or abstained on IB48. It has been said that this was an unprincipled combination. We think not. The decisive thing here was the character of the debate and the problems associated with getting to grips with the issues. Neither of the MP documents were detailed enough in terms of practical suggestions for work for us to make a decisive move in support of them. The confusion was compounded by the ability of the two blocs to produce a document (IB39) which both sides could support. Why then did we all vote for IB45. Essentially it was because IB45 was more correct than IB48 and because our critique of it was only just beginning to emerge. Differing views on IB48 reflected different assessments of the significance of different parts in it.

It is important to stress that this is not a fence-sitting position. Neither is it "a bit of both" position. We are not avoiding the issues. Cdes. Kinnell and Carolan do not seem to understand this. They seem to think that we agree with them on MP work and that we simply voted for or abstained on IB48 for some factional purpose!

We believe that IB45 gives little in the way of a practical lead and crucially was divorced from an all-round perspectives document. In over 2 years of existence we have had no document which analysed the state of the class struggle and our role in it. All we have is a document which confirms our insistence on the centrality of the MP within the general situation.

(10)

This is an important point and relates to a comment I made at the last NC. In arguing for a full conference, I said that the NC had been elected on the basis of documents on individuals areas of work and that those now holding a majority position are now imposing their views on other things. I did not necessarily mean by this that Hill, Kinnell and Carolan were consciously seeking to do this in any underhand way. All I meant was that it was an inevitable consequence of their majority position.

I will however give here one example of the Hill/Kinnell/Carolan axis seeking to impose its views on the movement via an abuse of power derived from the particular role these cdes. play in our work. At the NC, we had clearly agreed that the H.....r campaign was the central priority of our MP work.

At the broad groups meeting the following weekend Hill/Kinnell sought to undermine this decision (which had thrown Kinnell into an uncontrollable fury by scarcely mentioning it, emphasising the problems etc.

Now this is one example I do know about and until I have concrete evidence I will disbelieve others. But it is certainly the case that any opposition to the Hill/Kinnell/Carolan axis is met with the most violent denunciations, verbal abuse and sheer hatred - or what appears to be hatred.

All this is not to absolve Smith/Jones from responsibility for factional heat but it is emphasised because at present H/K/C command a majority on leading bodies and it is their responsibility to try and solve "the problems".

At the forthcoming conference we will be discussing Ireland, CND and "Building the WSL". Where is the Perspectives document we are still waiting for 2 years after fusion? Where is the process of discussion round amendments to cde. Cunliffe's draft? It all seems to have been forgotten. We are involved in vote outs on disputed questions and discussion on specific areas of our work we have no overall perspective. And what do Carolan and Kinnell offer us as the centrepiece of discussion the focus for the development of the movement - "Building the WSL" (IB50).

Is it any wonder we have tried to intervene in the increasingly poisoned and disoriented atmosphere which has existed over the last two years. We are willing to put forward political arguments. For our pains we are slandered and villified. We believe the blocs are destroying the gains of the fusion, we believe their definition of the terms of debate are false. We believe they are incapable of solving the crisis - they can't even keep to conference decisions (eg. timing of the 3rd leg of the conference).

It is in the context of the above that we must judge the debate on "Building the WSL".

The first part of the report is devoted to a description of the work done during the year. It is divided into two main sections, the first of which deals with the work done in the laboratory and the second with the work done in the field. The first section is divided into three parts, the first of which deals with the work done in the laboratory during the year, the second with the work done in the laboratory during the year, and the third with the work done in the laboratory during the year.

The second section of the report deals with the work done in the field. It is divided into two parts, the first of which deals with the work done in the field during the year, and the second with the work done in the field during the year. The first part is divided into three parts, the first of which deals with the work done in the field during the year, the second with the work done in the field during the year, and the third with the work done in the field during the year.

The third section of the report deals with the work done in the laboratory during the year. It is divided into two parts, the first of which deals with the work done in the laboratory during the year, and the second with the work done in the laboratory during the year. The first part is divided into three parts, the first of which deals with the work done in the laboratory during the year, the second with the work done in the laboratory during the year, and the third with the work done in the laboratory during the year.

The fourth section of the report deals with the work done in the field during the year. It is divided into two parts, the first of which deals with the work done in the field during the year, and the second with the work done in the field during the year. The first part is divided into three parts, the first of which deals with the work done in the field during the year, the second with the work done in the field during the year, and the third with the work done in the field during the year.

The fifth section of the report deals with the work done in the laboratory during the year. It is divided into two parts, the first of which deals with the work done in the laboratory during the year, and the second with the work done in the laboratory during the year. The first part is divided into three parts, the first of which deals with the work done in the laboratory during the year, the second with the work done in the laboratory during the year, and the third with the work done in the laboratory during the year.

The sixth section of the report deals with the work done in the field during the year. It is divided into two parts, the first of which deals with the work done in the field during the year, and the second with the work done in the field during the year. The first part is divided into three parts, the first of which deals with the work done in the field during the year, the second with the work done in the field during the year, and the third with the work done in the field during the year.

WHY HAS CDE. KINNELL LEFT THESE RESOLUTIONS OFF
THE NC AGENDA ?

IB 83 is a masterpiece of factional intent and a kick in the teeth for the decisions of the lat NC.

Cde. Oliver's resolution which was passed at its last meeting laid down standing orders for the NC including:

- a) At least four days notice of meetings/agendas - flouted by Kinnell
- b) An agenda which included a political report (which bit is this supposed to be?): an EC report (not mentioned). Sort of wasted our time discussing it didn't we.

It is clear to even to most disinterested onlooker (and these grow numerically greater by the day) that Carolan's article is designed to provoke the faction cdes into splitting and the NC agenda is supposed to provide this provocation with the best possible cover via an implied suggestion that C/K/H get on with work and other people involve themselves in mindless disruption.

The quite legitimate campaign for the convening of the national conference is portrayed as a diversion from the day to day work and simply the initiative of the faction!

Cde. Kinnell has deliberately left off the agenda two resolutions from the Coventry Branch - not because he will argue against taking discussion on them but because he wishes to avoid reporting to the membership that our branch is overwhelmingly behind the call for the conference to be convened. Indeed he and the other so-called leaders of our movement continue to lump together all calls for national membership gatherings as willfull attempts to disrupt the movement.

So that the membership can understand the background to the Coventry resolutions it is important to go back and explain how each arose.

After the last NC I gave a factual report to the branch. This was followed by discussion during which cde. Oliver expressed grave disquiet over the atmosphere within the movement and the situation on the leading bodies. In response to cde. Oliver's outline cde. Lovell proposed the convening of a national membership meeting to discuss the factional situation. This proposal was made in order to bring the disputes out into the open, clear the air etc. The whole branch voted for it.

In the next few weeks the situation developed somewhat. Since that branch meeting we have held two more and are due for one on the evening before the NC. At each of these three branch meetings there has been either an EC member or a full-time worker - we have become a popular branch.

Cdes. Kinnel and Joplin attended the next branch meeting-uninvited. They attempted to throw their weight around, pretended they were interested in helping the branch out etc. They were there to shore up their dwindling support and attempt to set-up a pro C/K/H faction within the branch.

Why has cde. Kinnell.....2

Our next branch meeting was graced with the presence of Hill. Hill is in charge of building a faction within the Coventry branch. He is also considered the best option for making C/K/H seem reasonable. He does not get hysterical like Kinnell he is not a comic book character like Carolan (who is best known to Coventry branch cdes. as the speaker who never turns up to public meetings). He is the most politically sensible of the three and pretends a measure of agreement with cde. Oliver against Kinnell and Carolan.

Hill invited himself to the branch meeting on the spurious grounds that we had discussed the convening of the National Conference and he had come to put the point of view of the NC majority - that the national conference would have to be in October or November.

Despite being told that he was mistaken, that we had not discussed the national conference, that our resolution was for something different, Hill proceeded to use the time awarded him on the basis of his EC status to insist our call was all part of the same thing and that it was a diversion from building the movement.

So eloquent was Hill, so convincing were his arguments, so believable was his claim to be only interested in building the movement that when we voted on a resolution to call on the NC to convene the national conference at Whitsun and start the necessary pre-conference discussion right away Hill got the support of one cde. The voting was 7 for, 1 Agst, 1 Abst.

Kinnell must know that Hill failed dismally in the branch meeting. He must know of the resolution because we gave it to Hill to take back immediately. He left both resolutions off the agenda because he doesn't see the difference between the faction's resolution and the Coventry branch's resolutions. For him, as for Carolan and Hill the only important task is to prevent the national membership from meeting, exchanging experiences and ideas and calling the factional hoodlums who dominate the WSL leading bodies to task. Kinnell like any bureaucrat fears the membership - he is right to do so. They will see through his attempts to paint the faction as the disrupters and his undeclared faction as the Bolsheviks. Some cdes. will recognise the usual disdain for branch resolutions which is typical of the C/K/H faction. While they can keep the membership atomised they can keep a grip on power. Should they have to face a gathering of the entire membership their game will be up.

To use your phrase cde. Carolan "Enough is enough" or perhaps one far more apt in your case "Time gentlemen, please".

Parsons