

The EC on March 16 called a special National Committee for:

MARCH 31

starting 10.30am in London (precise venue to be circulated later, or phone in).

The items on the agenda are: the faction's response to the resolution passed at the last NC (see page 5 of this bulletin: the EC asked the faction to present a written reply before the March 31 NC); and the current political situation, specially the miners' strike.

The EC also received a letter from Jagger (see end of this bulletin). Smith said there was no possibility of discussing it. Parkinson moved, and it was agreed; that the letter should lie on the table.

NATIONAL COMMITTEE, MARCH 10, 1984

'SOME IMMEDIATE TASKS'

(See IB 83 for original draft, IB 86 for amended version).

Kinnell introduced; discussion. Parsons proposed that the document not be voted on but instead go to pre-conference discussion. Proposal lost, 2 votes for.

Smith, Jones and Cunliffe declared as a general explanation of their votes that they agreed with most of the practical proposals in the document but disagreed with the politics.

Voting:

- | | | |
|-------|--|--|
| 1.E. | Jones amendment to delete last sentence on anti-union laws campaign and instead insert proposal to recall Sep. 17 conference on theme 'Crisis of leadership in the TUs' | Lost, 4 for (Cunliffe, Jones, Piggot, Smith) |
| 1.F. | (On health cuts campaigning) | Carried 8-6 |
| 1: | rest of whole section ('Industrial') bar paras 3 & 5 of 1.E. | Carried 12-5 (Cunliffe, Jones, Piggot, Parsons, Smith against) |
| 1.E. | paras 3 & 5 (on anti-union laws campaign) | Carried unanimously |
| 2.A. | Kinnell amendment to Hill amendment (add to 2.A. "This should be coupled with propaganda for general strike action", rather than "This should now be tied to a call for the TUC to prepare a general strike, and go with propaganda for general strike action in the paper") | Carried 9-7 |
| 2.A. | Hill amendment, as amended | Carried 12-5 |
| 2.A. | Carolyn amendment (add 'Fight the Tories' to 'Break collaboration') | Carried unanimously |
| 2.C. | Hill amendment (add reference to stepping up propaganda for workers' government) | Carried, 2 against, 3 abstentions |
| 2.A&B | (as amended: on 'break collaboration' and 'recall the TUC') | Carried, 1 against, 1 abst. |
| 2.C. | (Workers' government) | Carried, 5 against |

- 2.D.....(Demands on leadership).....Carried, 4 against
3. Weightman amendment (on workplace branches) Carried, 2 against,
2 abstentions
- 3., all but last para of C (on 'Militant') Carried, 1 against,
1 abst.
- 3., last para of C Carried, 1 against,
1 abst.
4. (On women. There was some discussion about
broadening out the scope of the conference). Carried, 1 against,
2 abst.
5. Joplin amendment (to add point /E, on
students) Carried, 14 for,
3 against.
- 5., as a whole (on youth) Carried, 1 against,
3 abstentions.
6. Weightman amendment (addition on workplace
branches) Carried, 1 against,
2 abstentions
- 6.D.....Hill amendment (on new nominations for
councillors being taken with 'caution', not
'great caution', and decided by OSC):
- Levy amendment: EC, not OSC Carried 7-5
- Amendment as amended Carried, 14 for, 1
against, 2 abst.
- 6.D. Hill amendment (omitted in error in IB 86):
add "The experience of the Militant MPs
confirms that Parliament is a more useful
platform for socialists than the council
chamber. Branches should immediately invest-
igate the possibilities of putting forward
our supporters in the forthcoming round of
re-selection, and discuss these with the
OSC".
- Cunliffe amendment to the amendment: Carried 7-5
- 'EC' not 'OSC'
- Amendment as amended: 1st sentence Lost
- 2nd sentence Carried, 2 abst.
- 6.E. Matthews amendment: delete after "... a bad
odour around us" in 7th para, and replace by
"Local Bs have been set up in many areas.
Generally they have been set up where left
caucuses have been established at wider than
constituency level, and have adopted a B iden-
tity. As a model for left unity London B has
had a superficial attraction. Its political
ambiguities make it and more so its local
imitations quite unstable and often of little
durability. But where local B groups are
established we must press for (three * points
as in original text.) Our involvement in them
should depend on our success in getting them
to take up this orientation, in the absence
of a local broad group of comparable strength."
- 6.E. Keith amendment: delete last para on page 4- Lost
in IB 83 (on maintaining broad groups)

- 6.A. (Assessment of Labour Left) Carried, 3 against, 2 abst.
- 6.B. (Prospects for organising the Left) Carried, 23 for, 3 against, 2 abst.
- 6.C. (Workplace branches) Carried, 13 for, 2 against (Parsons, Piggot), 1 abst.
- 6.D. (On local government Left) Carried, 3 against (Smith, Jones, Piggot)
- 6.E. First para: assessment of our 'broad groups' Carried, 12 for, 4 against, 2 abst.
Rest (on 'B') Carried, 11 for, 7 against.
- 7.E. Strummer amendment (addition on May 26 and June 9 demos) Carried, 15 for, 1 against, 1 abst.
7. as a whole Carried, 17 for, 1 abst.
- New section 8 on international solidarity, proposed by Cunliffe.
Amendment from Kinnell, to say instead that 'Every sizeable League branch must...', and delete 2nd sentence. Lost.
New section Carried, 17 for, 1 abst.
- Old section 8, now section 9
Amendment from Weightman (addition on workplace branches) Carried, 12 for, 2 against, 2 abst.
- 9.A. ('Wiganisation' etc.) Carried, 1 against, 2 abst.
- 9.B. (areas for 'Wiganisation') Carried, 12 for, 3 against, 2 abst.
- 9.C. (on paper sales) Carried, 15 for, 2 'not voting' (Oliver, Parsons)
- 9.D. (on recruitment among youth) Carried, 1 abst.
- 9.E. (on internal situation): left for voting later, but in fact the NC never came back to it.

PROPOSAL FOR T.U. SCHOOL

(See IE 83. Weightman had an amendment to add O. workplace branches to agenda of school).

Parsons suggested that branches be asked what items they would like to be on the agenda: this suggestion was accepted tho' not formally voted on.

Smith spoke against the Weightman amendment. He also proposed that details of the school be fixed by EC rather than OSC: this was lost 7 to 8.

Weightman amendment carried, 11 for, 4 against.

Resolution as amended carried, 15 for, 1 against, 1 abst.

CONTROL COMMISSION REPORT ON COMPLAINTS BY SMITH AND GUNLIFFE

Kinnell moved the following resolution: .C.3

This NC notes the CC's report. We note that while the CC disagrees with the NC's political judgment on some issues, and while the CC has not heard the NC's case, it does not find the NC was acting unconstitutionally or present new facts to the NC. .C.3

On the recommendations:

- a) We will schedule the general question of the scope of the CC for later discussion; (Recommendation: That the NC accept the CC's definition of its own scope and operation)
- b) The NC reaffirms its existing policy on the paper, as defined by the last Conference and the NC since, which includes a generally liberal attitude to the appearance of minority views in the paper; (Recommendation: That the NC reaffirm the policy of open access to the paper)
- c) Lapsings are carried out as stipulated. The NC cannot accept the CC's recommendation on fines. Here warning and a chance to appeal are sufficient. Or else the use of fines as a small disciplinary measure is impossible. The Constitution recognises this explicitly in the case of fines for absence. (Recommendation: The CC will investigate whether the process of debt collection has been administered impartially. Lapsings and fines should be carried out under procedures allowing anyone penalised to have a hearing at the meeting at which the penalty is decided).
- d) The issue was not one of the charges put to the CC. The CC has not heard the NC's political case, and from its report does not seem to be aware of it. (Recommendation: that the NC reconsider its instruction to Gunliffe to work on the paper).

Voting

Preamble to Kinnell resolution: carried 10 for, 7 against, 2 abst. .C.2

Kinnell (a): carried 10 for, 7 against, 2 abst.

.. .. (b): 12 .. 5 (Parsons 'not voting') .C.1

.. .. (c): on lapsings, carried 12 for, 5 against, 2 abst
on fines, carried 10 for, 3 against, 1 abst.

.. .. (d): carried, 10 for, 7 against, 2 abst.

Kinnell stated that in his view the procedure on fines in relation to the Oxford Factory branch had been clumsily carried out and had caused understandable offence.

Jones moved that Kinnell's proposal on (c) be ruled out of order as breaching the constitution. This motion was defeated.

Jones moved that all the recommendations of the CC be accepted. .C.1

Voting:

on (a), lost 7-10;
on (b), carried 11-6;
on (c), carried;
on (d), defeated.

This vote on (c) left the NC apparently contradicting itself, so later it was agreed (by 13 votes to 2 [Smith, Pigot] with 2 abst. [Gunliffe, Levy] to re-vote.

The re-vote was taken in parts.

CC to investigate impartiality of debt-collection: carried 18-1

Procedure on fines: lost 8-10 with 1 abst.

Procedure on lapsings: carried 11-5 with 2 abst.

CAROLAN RESOLUTION (IB 83)

Amendments were added by Carolan to the resolution so that it read:

This NC declares that the situation must be resolved by the next NC one way or the other. The faction must decide to go out of the WSL or come into it. It cannot continue the way it is.

The NC declares that a split is neither desirable nor necessary, and that it can be avoided if the faction shows itself willing to build the organisation and to accept - for now - minority status.

The following are the basic minimum preconditions for integrating the faction into the organisation.

a) That all members of the faction fulfill their basic obligations as regards paper sales, dues, etc., like all other members of the organisation not formally exempted.

b) The faction accepts majority rule.

c) An end to federalism.

d) That the faction accepts a full share both in decision-making and in responsibility within the organisation, or accepts exclusively-majority decision-making. The faction leaders either work constructively in the leading committees, or get off them and accept a subordinate role. The committees must be allowed to function properly.

e) That the faction leaders cease irresponsible and disruptive agitation.

The imposition of these conditions is nothing more than the enforcement of democratic-centralist norms.

After discussion the resolution was carried 11-8, as follows:

For: Callaghan, Carolan, Collins, Hill, Joplin, Keith, Kinnell, Lewis, Matthews, Strummer, Whetling.

Against: Cunliffe, Jagger, Jones, Levy, Oliver, Parsons, Piggot, Smith.

PARSONS RESOLUTION

Parsons moved: "That the NC confirms its faith in the present membership of the Control Commission to carry out its allotted tasks in an impartial manner".

Callaghan moved the motion not be put: it posed to the NC a false alternative of either giving special endorsement to the CC, or voting no confidence in it. Callaghan's proposal carried 10-5 with 1 abstention.

FINANCE

Kinnell reported. Four resolutions were passed (see separate sheet)

A. Unanimous

B. 11 for, 4 against. (Kinnell asked that in voting on this the NC recognise the possibility of giving a waiver on the fines where it appeared that there had been a real problem of information getting through to individual comrades, as in Oxford Factory).

C. 12 for, 2 against, 2 abst.

D. 14 for, 2 against.

Parsons made a statement. His reported statement (in Kinnell's financial report) that he (Parsons) did not sell the paper was an exaggerated report, due to a misunderstanding.

CUNLIFFE & EC

Kinnell for the EC moved that Cunliffe be removed from the EC because of his standing defiance of an NC instruction. EC is responsible for carrying out NC decisions between NCs; it is a nonsense to have members in standing defiance of NC.

EC resolution carried by 10 votes to 8 (with 1 abstention). (Voting as on Carolan resolution above, except Strummer abstaining on this rather than voting for).

CONFERENCE

Smith withdrew the faction resolution for an April conference in favour of the Coventry resolution for a Whit conference.

The resolution was lost by 6 votes to 11.

Smith then announced that he intended to requisition a special conference on the basis of signatures of 25% of the membership to the following call:

In view of the rapidly worsening internal situation of the group and the damaging effect of the articles and resolutions in IB 83, the following members call for a special conference under the constitution. The situation has now gone beyond the point where it can be dealt with by the leading committees and must go to the membership. The subject of the conference is the internal situation in the group and the matter of democratic rights.

We undertake to produce documents for conference within 2 weeks and this to be followed by a two-month pre-conference discussion.

Hill from the chair said that to comply with the constitution the call would have to be submitted in the form of actual signatures. This was agreed.

Carolan asked Smith whether he would comply with the resolution just passed (above).

Smith said that he would make no statement on that.

.....

APPENDIX: LETTER FROM JAGGER TO E.C. 16.3.84

At the last NC Smith expressed the opinion that there was not a major political question on which the faction had agreement with the majority. (He cited world imperialism and world Stalinism as examples).

If this is the case the question arises whether there is any point in continuing as a single organisation. The faction cannot in the foreseeable future change the existing positions of the organisation. The prospect for the future would be a long period of minority status in an organisation whose politics they completely repudiate.

At the same time the possibilities of discussing these differences with a view to clarifying them lessen by the day.

Is it not time then for both sides to agree that the fusion is dead and concentrate their efforts on negotiating an end to the fusion?

A further intensification of the present climate inside the organisation can only end in a split. In the process many comrades on both sides will be lost to revolutionary politics, possibly for good. The faction will come out of a split in no condition to continue as a political organisation.

If an end to the fusion is negotiated, and a re-division of equipment pooled at fusion is agreed, then both groups will be in a position to try to make a go of it in organisations based on their own politics, and avoid losing the large numbers of comrades who will inevitably become disillusioned by a messy struggle and, in my view, an inevitable split.

STO THE ROT, STO BICKERING, START BUILDING

When is a minority not a minority? When it is the Smith faction. They lost the arguments at last year's conferences but are still intent on stopping the MAJORITY implementing the decisions and building the group. Of course they should have a right to argue their politics within the group but not to the extent of paralysing the group, and only if they are serious about building the group around the policies decided at the last conferences. I am not convinced that this is the case.

Their call for a conference, if successful, can only further damage the group. To go into another period of pre-conference documents, discussions etc can only distract from the practical work to be done in the movement, which some of us are interested in. I believe the motives lay in a desire to regroup forces, have another bash at the majority, and prepare the way for a split.

Since this political headbanging has been carrying on since last conference what has been the response of the membership? Some branches have got on with the job of building the group, participating in the class struggle, wanting more leadership from the centre, but recognising the pressures and distractions the full timers were under.

Some comrades have resigned, and for many reasons. Some couldn't take the discipline of a bolshevik organisation and are therefore no loss. Some said the factional struggle was too much for them, these losses are obviously more worrying and hopefully in the passage of time when things are sorted out one way or another they will return to the fold.

Some individuals/branches have gone for the other option, 'neither Carolan nor Smith but a great deal of roaring'. This option also leaves a good deal to be desired. To make no distinction between both sides ignores the politics. Carolan, Minnell, Hill are trying to implement the politics of the majority of the organisation. The recent attacks on comrades Minnell are particularly insulting, his work rate and loyalty to the group is second to none. Compared to our almost non-existent Industrial Organiser yes, it is supposed to be comrade Smith and our striking joint editor the conclusions are obvious. So over the next few months, I hope comrades will try to carry on as normal even if it seems hopeless as more IP's are wasted on bashing the majority, and the obvious counter-attacks.

Hopefully the faction will accept they are a minority or decide that we are beyond the pale.

The sooner it makes its minds up the better for all of us.

SHO OUT THE FUTURE SHO OUT THE MAJORITY

Steve Entwistle Nottingham 12-3-84

Supplementary resolutions on finance

The NC instructs all NC members to campaign actively to increase sales of the paper and ensure regular payment of paper money.

B.

The NC instructs all comrades fined for non-return of new dues assessments to pay the fines and return the forms.

It also instructs the Treasurer to send all members who have not returned new forms 'deemed assessments' on the basis of the information available. Unless these members return alternative assessments within 10 days of receiving such 'deemed assessments', they are liable for dues at the deemed rate.

C.

The NC instructs Basingstoke, Oxford General, and Oxford Factory branches to comply with the terms of the EC resolution of 22.1.84 (bearing in mind the extensions granted to Basingstoke and Oxford Factory for certain items).

In particular, it instructs them to get their current payments for papers onto standing order, and to organise fund-raising towards their arrears.

It instructs these branches to hold special meetings within the next 10 days to be attended by the Treasurer.

From these meetings the Treasurer should report to the EC on progress and on individuals' arrears within these branches.

If the branches have not met the terms of the NC instruction, the Treasurer must begin proceedings to lapse individual members in those branches who are over 12 weeks in arrears on paper money.

Individuals lapsed under this resolution who put their affairs in order within 2 weeks of the lapsing shall be readmitted to membership without any loss of rights or positions.

The Treasurer is instructed to proceed with warnings to comrades in arrears on paper money in other branches, with the object of ensuring that by April 30 no members are over 12 weeks in arrears on paper money.