

INTERNAL BULLETIN No 92

Defend the Unity of the League!

Democratise the WSL!

An appeal by 8 NC members:

Cunliffe, Gunther, Jones, Levy, Oliver, Parsons, Piggot, Smith,

on behalf of the 51 signatories of the following request for a Special Conference of the League:

"In view of the rapidly worsening internal situation of the group and the damaging effect of the articles and resolutions in IB83, 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."

March 25, 1984.

Draft Resolution (For the special conference).

Defend the Unity of the League! Democratise the WSL!

Political differences are nothing extraordinary for healthy political organisations, though they strike fear and anger in the hearts of petty bureaucrats. Any movement aiming seriously to construct a revolutionary party comprising thousands and tens of thousands of workers must recognise the need to work with comrades who hold views distinct from the majority leadership of the day. To do this, they must establish norms and methods of work which enable such minority comrades to play - and feel that they are playing - an active, productive role in the development of the movement and its daily work.

The means to do this were elaborated first and put into practice by Lenin in the Bolshevik party model and the organisational methods of democratic centralism. This same model, defended by Trotsky against its bureaucratic distortion at the hands of the Stalinist bureaucracy, was further amplified by the leaders of the early American Socialist Workers Party in the course of their fight for a genuine proletarian revolutionary party against various petty bourgeois oppositions. Democratic centralism combines the disciplined, centralised implementation of agreed majority policies, with structures and mechanisms at each level to assert democratic control and the voice of the party's rank and file - including minority points of view - in the decision-making process, as well as the accountability of the central leadership to the party conference.

Two particular aspects of this democratic structure should be emphasised: one is the need for careful attention to the education of the rank and file (and in particular worker members) to enable them to make their own, independent political assessments of issues in dispute. The other is to stress the collective role of the leadership in the development of policies, statements, documents, and the administration of the party's press.

We believe that, albeit in very different conditions in today's very different WSL, these traditional norms and methods remain valid in general terms as guidelines for our party-building work. But they are in many ways quite the opposite of the present internal norms and methods implemented by the present EC Majority.

The conceptions which tend to lead in the wrong direction were contained - albeit in a fairly obscure way - in Carolan's "Party Building Document" (printed in IB50), which he tried to force to a vote at last April's Conference. It called for "one person management" of the various areas of work, the committees and commissions. This was then placed on the agenda of the August 1983 Conference: but there it was heavily voted down, with the Conference voting instead for an amendment from Cunliffe, which read:

"Rationalise our organisational structures, starting from the top. We need to establish a proper central office, and an organisational machine, implementing the decisions of the leading committees. It is essential that NC members, too, accept their responsibility for the implementation of NC decisions in their areas and the development of branch work. In this respect, the larger areas should reconstruct and reestablish the area committees, which facilitate a productive coordination of branch activity and the development of additional leadership comrades. While branch organisers and fraction convenors will of course continue to be the individual comrades responsible for the functioning of the work, that functioning should be seen in terms of regular meetings and collective discussion and collaboration, rather than individual or unilateral decision-making."