

STOP THE EXPULSIONS! -

WHO SHOULD DECIDE IF THERE IS TO BE A SPLIT -
THE MEMBERSHIP OR THE NC MAJORITY?

Thirty-nine members have been suspended "from all their functions, offices and membership in the League", pending their expulsion on April 14th at a reconvened special NC meeting. These suspensions have been carried out by the NC on a 14-8 vote under conditions where they are deciding effectively to suspend the constitution and act in defiance of it. Those suspended include three NC members and members from Oxford, Coventry, Leeds, Hull and London.

The constitution says, "Any member subject to discipline must have written notice of the charges against him or her and the time and venue of the hearing." Yet the intention of the majority to discipline members was not known until a few minutes before the NC meeting started, when four IBs were introduced, one of them (IB 99) containing the resolution calling for the suspension and expulsion of 39 members, and the reasons for it.

Objections that the meeting was out of order were voted down.

Why now?

Although the internal situation has been worsening since mid-December, it appears that the decision to move to mass expulsions was taken as soon as Carolan knew the extent of the support for the conference call. It had become clear that at least one third of the organisation was supporting it.

Why a special conference?

We had been pressing for the annual conference but at the NC on March 10th a new and more dangerous situation was created within the group. Carolan moved a motion (contained in IB 83) which everyone knew and interpreted was a determined move towards a split of some kind. This resolution placed a number of organisational demands on the faction which went well beyond the constitution of the WSL. It required that the faction demonstrate that they would comply with these conditions "by the next NC meeting" (normally in 6-8 weeks' time).

The same meeting also rejected the petition we presented from 53 members who were urging that the annual conference take place in the spring, to discuss both the political situation and the internal crisis.

After this decision, and in knowledge of the resolution having been passed, we presented the 53 names again, this time as a call for a special conference - the only constitutional avenue open to us (the comrades concerned had been consulted over this after we had seen Carolan's resolution).

Hill, who was in the chair, refused to accept the list, saying that he required the actual signatures. He went on to say that "once the signatures are in, the conference will be called automatically, and it will be the job of the EC to organise it, no further meeting of the NC will be necessary." We undertook to get the signatures under those conditions.

Stop the conference at all costs!

Carolan's response to this was to stop the conference at all costs, and things began to happen rapidly.

The next EC meeting was brought forward to a few days later, and that took two decisions: first to demand that the faction give a written answer to the March 10th resolution (something which the NC itself had not asked for), and secondly to bring forward the next NC meeting to March 31st (only three weeks after the previous one). Clearly significant moves were going to be made on that day, although at that time only Carolan knew what they would be.

Was an acceptable answer possible?

At the Hounslow branch meeting on March 22nd (the only place where a discussion on this involving members had taken place) it became absolutely clear that any reply we gave to the resolution would be rejected as inadequate. In the course of the debate, Smith asked Kinnell "Would it be enough for us to pledge that we will build the organisation and work under direction of its constitution?" Kinnell said no.

Despite this, however, we did reply, and our reply is reprinted in IB 99. We said that we would comply with the constitution and would expect the majority to comply with it as well. We have also submitted a document for the special conference (IB 92) which contains our proposals to lay the basis of resolving the internal problems. Both of these have been rejected out of hand, without any serious response.

Fifty-one signatures handed in

We sent more than the required number of signatures in to the office on March 21st. Far from Hill's statement being carried out, however (that the EC would organise the conference), the next EC meeting never took place. A meeting was only held on March 29th, two days before the NC meeting, at our insistence. By then the majority could argue "leave it to the NC - there's only two days to go".

The NC meeting then decided NOT to call a special conference, but to openly disregard the constitution. The constitution says the following: "A Special Conference may be called by the NC when it wishes. A Special Conference must take place within two months of the receipt of a demand for one supported by at least 25% of the full members of the WSL."

To justify this outrageous action, they voted for the following: "The constitution stipulates that when 25% of the members want a special conference then it shall be held. This NC believes that the spirit of the constitution - the spirit of the class struggle and of revolutionary Bolshevism - allows the NC a certain leeway in interpreting the constitution to take account of major events in the class struggle like the miners' strike" (IB 99, p.3).

So, it is all right to split the movement and carry out mass expulsions during a miners' strike, but wrong for those being expelled to call for a conference to defend themselves. If the concern for the miners' strike was genuine, Carolan would have suspended all his internal moves until after it was over.

Equally, to argue that the NC has "a certain leeway" in interpreting a section of the constitution which is clear, categorical and unambiguous in its meaning, and which contains a basic democratic right, is effectively to suspend the constitution.

Carolan's resolution says there will be a conference, but it will not be the conference we ask for under the constitution, and we will not be in the movement when it happens.

Expulsions on April 14th

It is now clear that the majority are absolutely determined that we

shall be expelled on April 14th. The decision will split the WSL. Yet it has been made by a few people at NC level. The membership of the WSL are being completely excluded from a decision to split their movement. The fusion took place two and a half years ago of two organisations of equal size. It was the decision of the members to fuse, at conferences of both groups and at a joint fusion conference. A few people at the top have no right to decide that in their opinion the fusion is at an end, and they will carry out expulsions in order to precipitate a split. We do not accept that; we accept that there are severe problems; we know that the leading committees are paralysed to deal with it. But all that says, is that the discussion must proceed to the membership. Any decision on the future of the movement must be their verdict. For our part, we have submitted, with others, our proposals in IB 92, as part of that discussion.

WSL members now have until April 14th to stop this disastrous course of events. No serious revolutionary can be neutral on this issue. This split, imposed on the movement by Carolan, would be a serious blow to the Trotskyist movement. We are confident that a majority of WSL members are opposed to these moves. We therefore call on them to make their voices heard in opposition before it is too late.

Drop the suspensions!

Stop the expulsions!

For a special conference for full discussion amongst the membership!

Jones, Piggot and Smith (NC members)
on behalf of those suspended.
2nd April 1984.