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## RESOLUTION ON BUILDING THE WSL

Carolan and Kinnell

### - I -

Most organisations on the left are stagnant or have lost proportionately far more members in the last period than we have - the SWP and SL, our most important competitors, for example. What defines the crisis of the WSL is not the loss of some members, but that this happens to us in a period in which we continue to have a big periphery, part of it organised, in which we have been at the centre of struggles in the O., in which setbacks (but limited and not debilitating ones) have occurred for the O. left for reasons which we have long explained in advance and indicating a turn to the unions that we have long argued for and practised. In these circumstances we should have grown (if not enormously), and we have stagnated instead. Why?

### - II -

These are the main reasons:

1. Since last May internal conflicts have absorbed much of our energies and made the internal life of the organisation unattractive to most people.
2. We have failed to knit together the different fields of work, such as TU and O work and work among the specially oppressed.
3. One of the most promising and potentially fruitful areas of our work - women - has been virtually wrecked by factionalism between groups of League women.
4. Youth work has had divergent sections within it. Our youth movement was conceived as the broad group for the youth - it has been the empty shell of a League front.
5. There are real and objective problems about recruiting some of our best O. contacts and quasi-supporters. They struggle through O. structures to which we relate and it is difficult to convince them to join and take personal responsibility for 'the party' - even when they recognise and broadly support its work.
6. The downturn in industrial struggle and the setback the organisation has suffered at Cowley inevitably have a depressing effect on us.

The new WSL is doing fewer regular industrial bulletins than the I-CL did. That form of orientation to the working class has fallen off.

7. The organisation - and in the first place its leadership - has been criminally negligent about that area of the left which has experienced mass growth in the last period: CND and YCND. Our involvement has been token. There is a strong streak of sectarian hostility to CND running through the organisation.

8. As a result of the deficiencies of the leadership, the tendency of many comrades to withdraw into local 'ticking over' in response to the difficulties of the organisation, and the continual factional conflict between blocs of considerable size, there is organisational chaos.

9. We have failed to intervene in and recruit from the crisis of our competitors - in the first place, the SWP.

### - III -

These are the main external manifestations. There are things more basic and organic as well, which underlie the things listed above.

The fusion brought together in a single national framework two very distinct organisations. Fusion in the sense of the integration and interaction that would come from uniting closely linked groups in day-to-day work in the main did not occur. The two main areas of old WSL strength, O and L, either did not merge with an I-CL group at all (O) or did so only with a small and untypical group (L). At fusion we failed to establish any coherent or articulated division of labour

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at leadership level. The factional conflicts over the last year have exacerbated this and made it more difficult to adjust or remedy.

More than that, however, we find that there is nothing like agreement in the organisation on the norms, rules, standards and procedures of a democratic centralist organisation in the Leninist tradition. The pre-fusion groups have rubbed destructively against each other in the framework of the new WSL. We have found at every turn sharp divergences of expectations, rules of functioning, standards and norms. This more than any formal political disagreement has led to the intense heat on the leading bodies.

For this reason it is worthwhile setting out briefly the theory of the revolutionary party that must, we suggest, determine how we function in the future - and also the ways in which we can no longer afford to go on functioning.

#### - IV -

The working class is unique among all revolutionary classes in that it remains a class of wage slaves until, by seizing political power and the means of production, it makes the decisive step towards emancipating itself. Contrast the classic bourgeois experience. The bourgeoisie develops historically within feudalism and neo-feudalism as part of a division of labour within society which allows the bourgeoisie to own a segment of the means of production, and itself to be an exploiter, long before it takes political power in society. It thus builds up wealth, culture, systems of ideas to express its interests and view of the world. It, so to speak, ripens organically, and the taking of power, the sloughing off of the old system - even if accompanied by violence - represents the natural maturing and growth of a class already in possession of important means of production and a share of the surplus.

The working class remains an exploited class - - in more developed capitalist countries, the basic exploited class - up to the death knell of bourgeois social and political rule. It does not accumulate leisure, wealth or its own distinct culture. Its 'natural' condition as a raw social category is to be dominated by the ideas of the ruling class. Its own natural and spontaneous self-defence and bargaining within the capitalist system - trade unionism - binds it ideologically to the ruling class, to bargaining within the system and in times of crisis taking responsibility for it. Its natural tribunes and intellectuals are the trade union bureaucracy. On the face of it the proletariat might be doomed to go through history as a subordinate class.

Marx and Engels themselves wrote: 'The ruling ideology in every society is the ideology of the ruling class'.

In fact the working class becomes a revolutionary class, conscious of its own historic class interests and possibilities, in the following way, according to the views of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky.

A set of social theories is created and developed on the basis of bourgeois social science (economics, philosophy, history) which uncovers the necessary logic of the historic evolution of capitalism towards the completion of its organic tendency to become more and more 'social' and monopolistic - by way of common ownership and the abolition of capitalism. The proletariat is located as the protagonist in this stage of history. Marx analysed and uncovered the modes of economic exploitation of the proletariat within the formal (and seemingly fundamental and real) equality of capitalist exchange relationships. In short, a segment of the 'intellectuals' of the bourgeoisie come over to the proletarian wage slaves.

The proletariat itself evolves as a class through the stage of primitive elemental revolt at being driven into the capitalist industrial hell-holes to the stage of organising itself in combinations to get 'fair' wages, and then to the stage of banding itself together for political objectives. It develops various political traditions. In Britain the world's first mass working class movement

grouped around the demand for the right to take power. In France a tradition of communist insurrection, involving sections of the proletariat, developed. It was rooted in the left wing of the great bourgeois revolution. A tradition, experience and theory of working class politics developed. Marx and Engels put a 'floor' of a theory of the evolution of society (evolution including revolutions at turning points) under the once-utopian aspirations of the early working class movements.

These developments, in the course of the experience of the 1st, 2nd, and early 3rd Internationals, produced the following solution to the problem posed by the peculiarities of the proletariat as a class.

Instead of control of a portion of the means of production, the working class develops its own organisations. Within these organisations a struggle takes place between the ideas that represent the historic interests of the proletariat - Marxism - and the ideas of the bourgeoisie. This struggle occurs even where Marxists are the founders of the labour movement.

The working class is everywhere forced by its conditions under capitalism to struggle for the basics of life. This struggle tends to break down the power of the ideology of the ruling class. At its highest point, in times of tumult, it can escalate to mobilisations involving the class as a class, and to a spontaneous socialist consciousness capable of being linked through the work of a pre-organised and educated vanguard with a scientific strategy.

The revolutionary party is the protagonist in the work of struggling to emancipate the proletariat ideologically and to organise it for its own interests, as a 'class for itself'.

The revolutionary party has as its central task to achieve the political and organisational independence of the working class. It needs the organisational sinews of a body of socialists organised for combat - all the way from the struggle on a trade union level at the point of production through to organising an armed insurrection. But it is centrally, irreplaceably, and uniquely, the carrier of a system of ideas, a world outlook, a socialist programme, a method of analysing the world and society which serves the interests of the working class.

Only the conscious struggle of the living Marxists, reacting specifically and concretely, focusing and redefining Marxism, can make of Marxism a consistently revolutionary instrument for the working class, for separating out and maintaining scientific consciousness in the revolutionary working class. If there is no irreplaceable function of this type for the Leninist party, then there is no need for our party. Were it not for the ideological task of the revolutionary party of the working class, were it not for the peculiar problems of the proletariat in that respect, then the working class could be expected to improvise the necessary organisation for the seizure of power, as the bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie have done. If all the proletariat needs is an organisation, then the tightly knit revolutionary organisations are just sects, premature and almost certainly irrelevant.

If what the proletariat needs is a machine - then it does not need to have its militants labouring for decades in advance of the maturation of the situation where it requires an uprising.

The consequences of this are that our party is in the first place and irreplaceably a selection of politically conscious militants committed to activity in the struggles for the party's goals. It must thus be selected on the basis of a minimum of political education and knowledge, and commitment.

If it is to be a party which is a living organ in the class struggle, then it must try to integrate itself in all the areas of the class struggle. If it is to be a party whose deliberations correspond to experience in the struggles of the working class, then it has to be a party of activists - of people with a minimum of commitment to the struggle. That commitment, under the direct control of the party, must be a condition of participation in the party's deliberations - that is, of full membership.

of full membership.

It has to be a party of the proletariat, but it is not identical to the proletariat: it must be capable of standing against the proletariat and of struggling within it when the mass of the working class is under the influence or domination of the ruling class. Its proletarian political character depends in the first place on its programme and its historical relation to the proletariat; a proletarian character in the crude sociological sense is not sufficient and in some epochs may not be possible.

The proletarian party without a mass working class membership organised at the point of production and deploying the power which the working class potentially has at the point of production, is impotent; proletarian militancy at the point of production devoid of the historical programme of working class socialism and perspectives for achieving it, is sterile and ultimately impotent.

The party is 'the vanguard of the class' - a selection of the most militant, educated, devoted persons in the working class, and <sup>among</sup> its sympathisers and protagonists from other social strata. Within the party, a similar unevenness in education, experience, commitment to that which characterises the relationship between the party as a whole and the class, emerges between leading layers and the rest of the organisation.

Certain organisational structures flow from this: the party, when it chooses to cut itself off from the class, though ultimately it is subject to the class and can have no interests separate from it and can achieve none of its objectives without its activity. The National Committee and its subsidiaries within the party cut themselves off from the party where necessary to deliberate and discuss - though ultimately they must submit to the control of the party and can do nothing without it. There is a whole literature on these questions.

- V -

What does all this mean for the WSL now and for the future, and what does it say about the problems of the last 18 months.

a) We have a totally inadequate system of education of new members: i.e. we do not have a membership that has the elementary education necessary to a Marxist organisation. We need to restore some system of basic Marxist education. Many of the most heated disputes come from sheer misunderstanding - from us not speaking the same language.

b) We do not in fact have a system of membership in which only active members exist: we have a de facto category of inactive, or semi-active, members, and of members who do not even fulfill their basic financial commitments. Inevitably this demoralises the active members. (For example, on the week's wages levy, many of those who were up to date on their commitments felt that they were being asked to pay double and more because of those who did not meet the minimum). We do not have a reliable system of compliance with NC/EC/OC decisions.

c) We do not have an efficient national organisational structure in which an educated membership deliberates, votes, and, having taken decisions, carries them out.

d) We do not have the most elementary degree of separation of the leading committees, even for initial deliberations, from the rest of the membership. At the same time, lack of organisational structure, and freelance systems of information, mean that members are patchily and inadequately informed of decisions and discussions in the organisation.

e) We do not have a system of resolving differences politically on the basis of structured discussion.

f) We have, to crown all this, a central day to day leadership which not only has different standards within it on the points above, but is unintegrated and often divided.

perspectives, prevent many of our comrades from being able to convince our contacts (and mean that many probably don't even try much - instead 'ticking over' in routine labour movement activity). We have no systematic drive to work through our basic politics with contacts and recruit them.

Yet this is a fundamental part of our work - in historical terms. The chaos in the organisation and the tendency to break down into unintegrated constituencies means that we lose the chance of appealing to one-sidedly TU or O militants on the basis of being an integrated and coherent party which links the various segments of struggle. Above all we fail to convince many of our comrades that the WSL is irreplaceable - and naturally this reduces the pull these comrades can have on our periphery.

The devotion of the militant to the party is the product of such a conviction. Sects achieve it by way of a paranoid counterposition of themselves to the rest of the world, and in particular the rest of the labour movement and the left. It is achieved in a serious organisation by way of the education of the militants in a revolutionary outlook and psychology, and a devotion to the organisation as the embodiment of this; instead of the sticky substances of sectarianism you get rational devotion. This presupposes an educated cadre which collectively applies the standards of minimum activity, comradely relations in discussion, etc.

- IX -

Antonio Gramsci pointed out that the Catholic Church does not maintain its ideological unity "by bringing the 'simple people' up to the level of the intellectuals (the Church does not even set itself this task...), but by an iron discipline over the intellectuals so that they do not pass beyond certain limits of differentiation..."

"Marxism is antithetical to this Catholic position: Marxism does not seek to sustain the 'simple people' in their primitive philosophy of common sense, but instead of lead them to a higher view of life. If it asserts the need for contact between the intellectuals and the simple people it does so, not in order to limit scientific activity and maintain unity at the low level of the masses, but precisely in order to build an intellectual-moral bloc which makes politically possible the intellectual progress of the masses and not only of a few groups of intellectuals..."

"(This) means working to produce cadres of intellectuals of a new type who arise directly from the masses though remaining in contact with them and becoming 'the stay of the corset'..."

Thus Marxists aim to build a party in which the division between 'workers' and 'intellectuals' is broken down by workers becoming 'intellectuals' and by 'intellectuals' from non-worker backgrounds being tied by party discipline to activity in the working class.

- X - (for voting)

We need to do the following:

A. Make contact work a major routine activity of all branches. Each branch organiser must compile and maintain a branch contact file. Each comrade should have a list of contacts - maybe only one or two - whom s/he sees at least weekly to get them the paper and discuss. Each branch meeting should monitor progress on contacts.

The leading committees should discuss preparations - circulars, notes for guidance, internal meetings - for this turn.

B. Draw up a basic reading list for all comrades. Start classes for members and contacts on the basis of this list.

C. Initiate a series of discussions, beginning on the NC, on the party norms of our movement and key texts of Trotsky and Cannon.

D. Rationalise our organisational structures, starting from the top. We need to establish a proper central office, an organisational machine, over which the leading committees should function as a political leadership. In the branches and fractions, we need 'one person management' - in each situation, one person able to take decisions, give instructions, and be held to account.

E. Formally reaffirm the document adopted at our fusion conference on 'Obligations of Membership' (this will be republished).

F. Enforce it. Branches should review their membership, call to account all comrades not fulfilling their obligations, and lapse members who fail to respond adequately. New recruits should be required to work with us (selling the paper etc.) for a period before being admitted to candidate membership. No candidate member should be admitted to full membership unless s/he has fulfilled all the basic obligations of membership.

## THE FACTION AND POLITICAL DISCUSSION

Today will be busy, so this will be brief. First of all, I have not been told by anyone to write this: I am writing it because I am generally irritated by what I have just read in Cunliffe's article in IB 93.

Cunliffe starts off by quoting Cannon to the effect that you should not believe everything that people tell you, and then goes on to give a completely factional account of one discussion that took place at the youth school... where the vast majority of the organisation were not present.

Myself and TD from M/cr raised in one of the discussions our feeling that we should be putting forward the slogan 'general strike to kick the Tories out'. Cds Carolan, Whettling and Tyldsley disagreed. Cunliffe claims that the present majority disagreed simply because this slogan was one held to by the old WSL. This is ridiculous. The ex-WF ex-ICL cds have opposed this slogan for over a decade. They have good, rational reasons for doing so. In private discussion with Carolan afterwards he put forward good, rational reasons; and he never once motivated it on factional grounds - as other cds participating on the discussion will verify.

NB It was myself and cd TD who raised this issue. - and it was cd TD who first raised it in discussion in M/cr. The faction - which, according to Cunliffe are so much more concerned with practical politics than the rest of us, did not raise it. They did not even come into the discussion. And they made no attempt to talk to us about it afterwards.

Did they attempt to argue about our line in the class struggle now in this discussion? No they did not. Cunliffe's IB is a scurrilous bit of pointscoring after the event.

Finally, why did I get sent this collection of material? I know for a fact that cd TD has not received any of it. He is branch organiser, so his address is at least as readily available as mine is. Perhaps it is because TD is quite well known to be a fairly 'hard line' supporter of the majority, whilst I think I (I also think rather unfairly) have a reputation as a bit of a maverick. So in a last ditch attempt to win factional support, the faction have finally started to try to talk to people in M/cr. I'm afraid it doesn't wash.

It is outrageous that the faction is agitating for a special conference in the middle of a major class confrontation like this: a special conference not to discuss political issues but to consolidate a situation of internal warfare, or to prepare a split. As it happens, I agree with them on the question of the general strike, but my agreement stops there. And so does my patience.

Ellis

## DON'T HELP THE SMITH/JONES FACTION (AN APPEAL TO THE NC OF 14.4.84)

It's clear that the root of the current crisis in the organisation is the Smith/Jones group's refusal to accept the relatively minor importance in the national leadership that its defeats by the members and NC on a whole string of political issues demands.

As the now suspended minority is an extreme political hodge podge within itself it will only be able to exist separately either by federalism or by purging itself even further numerically.

The internal paralysis in the League is chronic and must be ended soon. The only question is how. The members are now faced with a choice between the majority's road of NC expulsions or the minority's Special Conference with its preparatory period being during the escalating miners' strike. The second option is clearly an example of sectarian self-interest rising above the proper tasks of participation, support and propaganda work which the group must set itself around a strike which is the best chance yet for the working class to throw back Thatcherism. This will cause serious comrades to group instinctively around the majority leadership's position.

There is however a more productive road which may not be apparent to those who have been at the very centre of the fierce factional fights and who, quite understandably, now want an end to it in very short order. There have been several references to bad 'smells', 'odours' and 'shells' arising around us as a result of the internal crisis and although this is inevitable steps should be taken to minimise it. A last bid should be made by the full membership to persuade the Smith/Jones faction to accept their position as a minority and failing this they should be given their 'day in court' and the necessary measures taken by the members as a whole rather than simply by the NC. The minority have cried foul frequently during the crisis and if expelled by the NC alone will be in the best position possible to maximise the use of the expulsions against us in the future. They will be courted by parts of the left (SL maybe) who will adopt their version of events against the League to woo them. They and we will be derided on the same basis by wider sections of the left (eg SWP/Militant/WRP) and the result will be an overwhelming stench rather than an odour.

Although this won't have much effect directly on the politically raw working class people that our current turn away from 'meetings' towards mass work will bring us into contact with it will seriously affect the lefts who will inevitably be 'around' during our efforts to involve and recruit new people. The cynicism of such lefts towards revolutionary groups can and does sometimes rub off on and poison new contacts and although we shouldn't trim to the likely reactions of other left groups as a first priority why give them ammunition that we don't have to?

Making a last, conference, effort, after the end of the miners' strike, but keeping that conference down to one day and with a short pre-conference period which doesn't open until the strike is over will reduce the smell to a minimum as any decision taken will have the authority of the full membership in conference. Additionally by making every member a part of that process it will bind us together to face the difficult period of picking up the pieces if the expulsions have to go ahead. Although a conference like this might be the last straw for a few more comrades, two factors suggest that this risk is small.

1. Those who are left now are sticklers by and large and will see it through to the end having come this far; 2. We stand to lose more from an offensive by other groups after NC expulsions on the lines of, 'How do you know it was carried out properly? Did your leadership involve you in it?' 'Was the expulsion your decision?' 'Why wouldn't your leadership let you decide?'

Granting the right of appeal against expulsions already carried out is not an adequate substitute. The spokespersons of the minority, or the formally as well as factually separate organisation as it then will be, will enter that process with no objective beyond covering their arses by stating for the record their version of the breakdown of the fusion. A debate of the deaf will follow and the expulsions will be confirmed - end of story.

This would throw away the last, very slim chance which the miners strike gives us to avoid or at least minimise the rupture. Practical work around the miners strike might yet give us a road back to facing the political differences of fusion by taking a bit of the heat out of the situation. Additionally, extended suspension of the minority during the strike will face members of the Smith Jones group with two FACTS,

- (1) The scrambled set of ideas that their new group would be based on.
- (2) The coldness of the political world outside the League.

Political reason might yet prevail among some.

If my suggestion was to be adopted and produced no positive results by the afternoon of the proposed one day conference then I would willingly move, or second and or speak and vote in favour of the necessary expulsions to enable our national centre to function again fully. Let's not play into the hands of the minority at the last moment out of frustration. I therefore propose,

- (1) That a one day conference on the internal situation be agreed for a few weeks after the end of the miners strike.
- (2) That the preconference period not open until the end of the strike and be no longer than three weeks.
- (3) No I.B. material on the situation be permitted until this preconference period opens. (Branch Organisers to collect any illicitly circulated material to be submitted as part of the information of conference on the conduct of the discussion.
- (4) Suspensions as voted on at the NC of 30/3/84 remain in force until the preconference period commences.
- (5) Full membership rights be restored to the minority on the opening of the preconference period.
- (6) Majority and minority leaderships to open the conference with practical proposals for a basis on which to maintain unity.

Picton (Basingstoke)

4/4/84 (written in haste apologies  
for typing errors.)

A BRIEF REPLY TO PICTON: Kinnell, for the EC

Picton's article reflects the understandable desire of many comrades to find a 'third way'. If there really were a third way, then those of us who fought and worked hard for the fusion, and have worked even harder to try to preserve it over two years of escalating faction-fighting, would like to take it. But Picton is not convincing.

He accepts the NC's basic case that we have a right and a duty to act against the faction. If we have the right to suspend them, as Picton proposes, then we have the right to expel them.

Picton's argument comes down to saying that we should make the concession of readmitting the faction for a period because (a) there may be a last chance, and (b) that would minimise the 'bad odour'.

On (b): details of what we do will make very little difference to the bad odour. I suspect that Picton's more complicated procedure may even cause a worse smell of skulduggery than the NC's simpler one. In any case, necessarily speculative estimates of effects on people who are anyway hostile or indifferent to us cannot outweigh hard consideration of the effects on our own work.

On (a): would that it were so! But the NGA dispute only made the faction's attitude worse, despite great efforts to integrate them. The start of the miners' strike only prompted the faction to further escalation of its destructive efforts -- a new shoal of allegations (IBs 80 and 81), the call for the special conference, the refusal to reply to the NC resolution 'Enough is enough'. It also prompted Smith's declaration that the faction had 'fundamental differences' with the WSL 'on every major question'.

The 'Document of the 8', whatever its other merits or demerits, has nothing to do with a new basis for coexistence. It proposes an agitation about details on which rank and file comrades cannot possibly make much of an informed judgment (e.g. the precise form of the EB), and a set-up to keep the whole organisation in constant uproar (conferences every 3 or 4 months).

It is not even an answer to the problems according to the faction's (and Parsons') analysis. They say that the problem is Carolan's and my alleged dictatorial tendencies and alleged mesmeric powers to make everyone else our 'hand-raisers'. That problem could only be resolved by removing us two from the organisation, or at least from any leading positions.

But the faction don't even propose re-electing the NC -- for the good reason that to do so they would have to propose a political platform and argue the issue on that basis.

To let ourselves in for two months of destructive agitation in our ranks by what is effectively a rival organisation, in the vague hope that peace may somehow come of it, is irresponsible.

But I suspect that the key question which Picton is putting to himself is the one he attributes to 'other groups': "How do you know it was carried out properly?"

Now it is true that there are a very large number of allegations flying about on which it is almost impossible for most members to make an informed judgment. I would not ask anyone to take my word for it on any of those allegations. Limits of time and energy make it impossible to give even the briefest answer to all the allegations (and if we tried, we could be sure that a lot more allegations would be going round by the time we finished our reply!)

But what I would ask every comrade to do is to look at the facts which you do know, and which you can check from the files of the paper and the IB.

a) Over two years there has been a growing political polarisation. Dialogue has broken down. (See articles in IB 14 -- 'The method of the tendency' -- IB 35 -- 'A sectarian regression' -- IB 58 -- 'What is wrong with IB 48' -- IB 70 -- 'The Oxford faction' -- IB 83 -- 'Enough is enough').

b) The issues have been debated at length, in four conferences and

in 18 months of almost continuous pre-conference discussion.

c) The faction have had full representation in the leading committees; unrestricted access to the Internal Bulletin; almost unrestricted access to the public press, even. They have been offered a very generous share of the leading positions in the organisation.

d) Where the faction's allegations concern serious political matters and can be checked from documents, they are untrue. (See IB 90, 'The dispute on the TUC').

e) The faction leaders have taken no responsibility for the running of the organisation, and have not done (Smith) or walked out of (faction sympathiser Cunliffe) their jobs in the central leadership.

f) The faction leaders have a stated attitude to the organisation that makes the NC's case that they are disruptive plausible and logical, to say the least. They think they have 'fundamental differences' with the WSL 'on every major question'; they believe our politics are so bad that 'no-one in the world Trotskyist movement will touch us with a barge-pole'; they regard the WSL leadership as 'worse than the trade union bureaucracy'. With those views, what reason do they have for not being disruptive?

g) No-one contests that the political polarisation, and its organisational consequences, have now reached the point where it is impossible to continue as we are. The faction does not contest this. They only argue that the problem is lack of minority rights for them. But (b) and (c) above disprove that.

h) There are no proposals in the field to mend the situation, other than the NC's (the 'Enough is enough' resolution, in IB 97) - which the faction has rejected.

i) The faction's agitation has become increasingly apolitical (see IB 97 - and all the faction's IBs! Note also the fact that they have formally 'dissolved' the faction in favour of a bloc on organisational issues).

j) The NC was freely and democratically elected. It has a right and duty to act to defend the organisation. The soon-forthcoming conference has the right to completely replace the NC if it wishes.

k) A conference for a split is a bad way to have a split (messy and damaging) and a bad way to have a conference (instead of one organisation deciding what it will do, we have two slashing at each other).

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#### WOT? ONLY HALF THE STORY by Kinnell

Never mind the extravagances of Cunliffe's article 'Wot? Only half a paper?' Time forbids more than two brief points.

1. The reason why the paper was eight pages one week was not to enable us to produce IBs. It was to enable us to produce the Broad Lefts pamphlet.

2. The decision for this arrangement was made at an EC, with Smith present and agreeing to it.

And a PS:

The reason why the following paper was 12 pages was again not production of IBs. It was that we did the paper one day early, and so had one day less production time.

## FOR PRINCIPLED POLITICS IN THE WSL

### PART 1

### THE POLEMICAL METHOD OF COMRADE CUNLIFFE

#### 1) "WOT ONLY HALF AN EDITORIAL TEAM"

So Comrade Cunliffe is concerned about the size of the paper. (IB 93). "The energies and resources which might otherwise have gone into producing our movement's press were devoted instead by our worthy Editor to the production of a strange blend of fantasy and frenzy - IB's 88 and 89...."

What Comrade Cunliffe of course fails to mention is that there would have been far more resources for producing the paper, at an important point in the class struggle, if he had not deserted his position on the paper in order to devote more of his time to factional activity.

Comrade Cunliffe is effectively asking the Majority to play dead while the Faction pour out a stream of factional documents, and travel the country in search of support. Yes if the Faction was not doing all this, and calling for conferendes to be organised, there would be far more time and resources to get on with producing the paper, and intervening in the class struggle. Just imagine how much worse this resource problem would have been if the NC had agreed to an April conference.

#### 2) THE WORKER LEADERSHIP - ALIAS SMITH & JONES

Lower down the page Cunliffe says "The entire, elaborately constructed myth of Smith and Jones seeing themselves in so many words (emphasis added) as a pre ordained designated, god given "worker leadership" rings slightly hollow if the reader can find the strength to soldier on to page 12A of IB 89, where Carolan admits that:

"I can't recall whether anyone used the expression 'worker leadership'" Cunliffe has been to clever here by half. Firstly he admits himself that it is not a question of the exact phrase "worker leadership" that is at issue when he says that the "myth" is of Smith and Jones "in so many words" seeing themselves as the "workers' leadership". So if the actual phrase is not important why make such a big deal about Carolan's statement, because what Carolan is saying is that he can't remember if the actual phrase was used, but that what was said at the March 10th. NC amounted "in so many words" to that claim. Carolan goes on then to give evidence as to why, in his opinion, Smith and Jones ~~xxxx~~ considered themselves to be, "in so many words" the worker leadership". Cunliffe makes no attempt to counter these "facts".

Cunliffe then goes on to say "He also admits that Jones appeared sincere when at the March 10 NC he denied ever hearing - let alone used the term." But in fact that is not what Carolan says. What he says is, "At the March 10 NC, Jones, his face showing the utmost sincerity, denied that he had ever heard the expression 'worker leadership.....' By chopping the text Cunliffe has distorted the meaning. Given the context in which Carolan wrote that sentence I take the phrase "his face showing the utmost sincerity" to be ironical, and it conveys a meaning to me totally opposite to that which Cunliffe wants us to accept.

I don't know if the "facts" Carolan presents are true or not, but I do know text chopping when I see it, and that, together with the fact that Cunliffe adopts this method as an alternative to refuting Carolan's "facts" inclines me to believe Carolan's picture of events rather than Cunliffe's.

#### THE YOUTH CADRE SCHOOL

Cunliffe attacks Wettling for going back to the RFMC as an example of a correct approach. But why not use the RFMC? It is the most successful campaign we have ever organised. It created the greatest degree of unity in the Left of the O that has ever been achieved. Surely it makes sense to use the most successful campaign you've organised as an example. Or does Cunliffe object to it as an example because of the prominent role played by Comrade Hill in the RFMC, and the fact that the "worker leadership" were nowhere to be seen.

The only similar campaign we have attempted to get underway since fusion is the MCDTUR, but that failed to really get off the ground, and couldn't therefore offer much in the way of a positive example.

Cunliffe then passes on to the question of the General Strike. He tries to have us believe that the only reason majority comrades at the school opposed "General Strike to Kick Out the Tories" was because it was an old WSL slogan. Why does he try to con us this way. Everyone knows that there has been two opposing positions on it since before fusion, and everyone knows the arguments against the slogan.

#### CUNLIFFE & IMPERIALISM

Many of the points I was going to make about Cunliffe's attack (IB 81) on Kinnell's analysis of imperialism have already been made in the document by Comrade Ellis. There are a number of other points I would like to make.

Cunliffe attacks Kinnell's method for lacking "concreteness" and "objectivity". Yet he does not challenge any of Kinnell's statistics with alternative statistics. Surely then it is Cunliffe who lacks "objectivity". His position is effectively "I don't know if what you say is wrong or right, but I'm damn sure I'm going to disagree with you anyway."

He promises us an alternative analysis of imperialism "more in line with reality". We can only hope that this document provides the "alternative" statistics which he fails to produce in the first part, and an analysis of the 5 areas he accuses Kinnell of not covering.

#### "Soviet Imperialism"

Cunliffe accuses Kinnell of falsifying Trotsky by text chopping, something which we have seen Cunliffe knows all about. He says (p7) Kinnell fails to tell us that the 'present expansion' referred to was Stalin's invasion of Eastern Poland in September 1939, a few days before the article was written. Trotsky was not writing about any general policy of expansion by the Stalinist bureaucracy, which would have merited more than a passing reference, but a specific concrete instance."

I want to present a few more quotes from "In Defence of Marxism"

which, I think put Trotsky's position more in context, and disproves Cunliffe's position.

1. "We do not entrust the Kremlin with any historic mission. We were and we remain against seizures of new territories by the Kremlin. (emphasis added) We are for the independence of Soviet Ukraine, and if the Byelo Russians so wish, - of Soviet Byelo Russia." (The USSR in War)

2. Further down from the passage quoted by Cunliffe Trotsky says,

"The Kremlin participates in a new division of Poland, the Kremlin lays hands upon the Baltic states, the Kremlin orients towards the Balkans, Persia and Afghanistan; in other words the Kremlin continues the policy of Czarist imperialism. Do we not have the right in this case to label the policy of the Kremlin imperialist itself?" (emphasis added)

Clearly Trotsky was not just concerned about Eastern Poland as Cunliffe claims. It is Cunliffe by text chopping who "falsifies" Trotsky not Kinnell. Yes Trotsky answers the question he poses rhetorically above in the negative. The policy of the Kremlin is not "imperialist" because that term has for us a more precise meaning, but Kinnell was not arguing that it was. What Kinnell was focussing on was Soviet expansionism.

3. Trotsky himself considered Kremlin policy expansionist as shown by a further statement a few lines further on where he says,

"However, aside from the manner in which to appraise the expansionist policy of the USSR itself, there remains the question of the help which Moscow provides the imperialist policy of Berlin." (emphasis added)

4. In the same article there are two further quotes which set Trotsky's ideas in more context, and which also are useful guidelines for assessing our attitude to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.

"Robespierre once said that people do not like missionaries with bayonets. By this he meant to say that it is impossible to impose revolutionary ideas and institutions on other people through military violence. This correct thought does not signify of course the inadmissibility of military intervention in other countries in order to co operate in a revolution. But such an intervention, as part of an international revolutionary policy, must be understood by the international proletariat, must correspond to the desires of the toiling masses of the country on whose territory the revolutionary troops enter. The theory of socialism in one country is not capable, naturally of creating this active international solidarity which alone can prepare and justify armed intervention. (emphasis added) The Kremlin poses and resolves the question of military intervention, like all other questions of its policy, absolutely independently of the ideas and feelings of the international working class. Because of this, the latest diplomatic "successes" of the Kremlin monstrously compromise the USSR and introduce extreme confusion into the ranks of the world proletariat."

And further on,

"We have never promised to support all the actions of the Red Army which is an instrument in the hands of the Bonapartist bureaucracy. We have promised to defend only the USSR as a workers' state and solely those things within it which belong to a workers' state."

Anyone taking the trouble to read "In Defence of Marxism" can see that Trotsky was not concerned solely with one isolated incident, but was analysing the effects of Soviet expansion carried out in a "military - bureaucratic" manner.

## PART 2

### SORTING OUT THE REAL ISSUES

My first reaction to reading IB 92 was that there was a lot in it that I agreed with. My second reaction was that the parts I agreed with had little or nothing to do with the real issues inside the organisation. My third reaction, therefore, was that this document was a smokescreen which shared many of the polemical sleights of hand contained in Cunliffe's documents analysed above.

### THE WSL REGIME

"To do this they must establish norms and methods of work which enable the minority comrades to play - and feel they play - an active, productive role in the development of the movement and its daily work." (IB 92)

But the minority have been given every opportunity. At the last conference a new method of voting by STV was used to try to convince the minority that they should play a full role in the organisation. I thought at the time that the decision was wrong, and experience has confirmed my feelings. I felt then that it was necessary for the Majority to have a clear majority on the NC so that it could get on with running the organisation on the basis of the conference decisions. As I feared pandering to the minority has simply led to a continuation of the arguments on the leading committees, at the expense of running the organisation.

"Democratic centralism combines the disciplined, centralised implementation of agreed majority ~~xxxxxx~~ policies, with structures and mechanisms at each level to assert democratic control and 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." (IB92)

It is the Minority who in spirit have refused to accept the decisions of the last conference. It is Cunliffe who has deserted the paper. Comrades from the minority cannot complain about exclusion from decision making when they voluntarily exclude themselves, and do not play a full part in sharing the burden of the League's work.

I agree with many of the practical proposals the document puts forward on improving organisation, and structure inside the League. I have many severe criticisms of the way the League operates organisationally in relation to

control of finance, the slap dash way we often intervening in events (demonstrations etc.) and the lack of organised discussion through area committees etc. But these are problems for all of us to resolve, not to lay at the feet of Carolan and Kinnell.

The practical proposals in the document are in fact a red herring. They are contained in the document as a smokescreen to blind us to the fact that the differences in the organisation are political. The proposals attempt to convey the idea that the entire problem is one of organisational control over the bureaucrats Carolan and Kinnell. That is not the problem. The problem is that there are clear political differences in the organisation. On the political issues the minority has been clearly defeated, but rather than accept this they have attempted to carry on the arguments, and extend them in a way which has disrupted the organisations work. At the same time just like the Abernites in the American SWP they erect the myth of Carolan and Kinnell's bureaucratism.

In my opinion some of the signatories to IB 92 have been won over because they have seen a group of comrades get ideologically hammered, and have responded by thinking that the cause must be something more than just the strength of argument. Its about time we could rely on political argument rather than sentimentalism.

The document is very similar in method to that of Cunliffe as analysed in Part 1. From a general statement about rationalising the organisation it moves almost by sleight of hand to the OSC exempting Carolan from paper sales. Really comrades is the best you can do? On the one hand Cunliffe deserts the paper throwing more work onto Carolan, and comrades in Oxford accrue a paper debt running into thousands, and on the other hand you gripe about Carolan not selling papers! Really comrades.

Yes NC members should accept responsibility for implementing NC decisions, and for developing branch work, but surely every comrade in the organisation can use thier intelligence to interpret this in the right spirit for those comrades who are working full time for our organisation. Or do the authors of IB 92 think that selling the paper is more important than ensuring that the organisation runs smoothly?

"At the same time, full time workers must be linked both with their local League organisations and actively involved in some aspect of work in the wider labour movement. In this way we combat the emergence or consolidation of damaging elitist conceptions and any separation between the League's leadership and its rank and file.

In this way we can hope also to avoid a situation where in some cases comrades least involved in the implementation of policy are the most influential in formulating it. That is the almost inevitable outcome of a drift into centralism without democracy."

Yes I agree with this. It is interesting that the word "linked is used,

because it suggests a looser relationship than the phrase used earlier "discipline of his branch". I think that linked is a better formulation because a full time worker should be primarily responsible for the working of the organisation as a whole rather than just the branch they are a member of. Sometimes there may be a conflict, in which case the organisation must be put before the branch which means that full timers cannot come totally under the ~~the~~ discipline of the branch.

However, I think it is important there is a link, and also important that full timers be involved in some area of wider labour movement activity, because in my opinion some mistakes, for example our attitude to B, have arisen due to an inadequate appraisal of what is going on inside it.

### POLITICAL DISCUSSION

"We have seen successive major shifts in the general situation ~~at~~ ~~home~~ (in Britain: the General Election, the clashes with the Tebbit laws, a new round of cuts and closures, and Chesterfield; internationally: Central America, Southern Africa, France, Argentina, Lebanon, Iran/Iraq, Ireland) all go past us with no serious prepared discussion at any level in the WSL. Instead leading committees have been transformed into largely a - political arenas for the moving of disciplinary and organisational resolutions. This lack of political discussion and analysis has practical implications." (IB92)

This statement is of totally the same nature as those of Cunliffe analysed in Part 1. On the one hand the minority keep on arguing about things settled at Conference, fail to put in their fair share of work in running and building the organisation, and then complain about the amount of time trying to resolve this situation is taking up on the leading committees.

### THE METHOD OF IB92

The method of IB92 is exposed in the following statement,

"In this context it (the EB) should end the present exclusion of minority viewpoints and offer access to minority positions on issues where there is no established WSL majority line."

The duplicity of this statement is revealed if you just go back a few lines where the document states,

"Other questions - Afghanistan, imperialism, etc - are known to be substantial inner party differences, most of which pre date the fusion of 1981, and were deliberately left aside for more leisured and comradely discussion inside the joint organisation. To pursue debate on these issues in the public arena of our weekly press in front of the whole British Left, before carrying out even the most basic internal discussion within the League simply exposes our weakest face to the workers' movement and does little to educate our comrades in Bolshevik norms or the politics involved."

In other words they themselves admit that it is untrue to talk about the exclusion of minority viewpoints.

### CONCLUSIONS

In my opinion the Faction have been given every opportunity to integrate themselves into the organisation and to play a full part in its decision making. They have chosen not to. There seems little political point in having another conference only to discuss these issues all over again after which the Faction would undoubtedly continue to ignore its decisions and disrupt the organisation. They should show that they are prepared to accept conference decisions, and build the WSL not just state it. In the absence of that the NC has the right to protect the organisation in anyway it sees fit.

There may however, be another reason why a conference may have been useful. It is that the Faction have built up their position around the supposed bureaucratism of Carolan and Kinnell. A disciplinary decision by the NC therefore will be used by the Faction to further this argument. Purely from a diplomatic point of view therefore a conference solely to discuss disciplinary proceedings against the Faction might have been better.

What is certain is that one way or another the situation must be resolved as soon as possible, because at the moment we are preventing ourselves from adequately intervening in the class struggle, and from adopting an adequate orientation to others on the Left. As a result we risk losing (through demoralisation and from failing to recruit) more comrades than we would from a split - regrettable as such an event would be.

Scott.

April 4th, 1984