

THE TRIBE OF THE MUGWUMPS

Carolyn

"One must not allow oneself to be misled by the cry for 'unity'. Those who have this word most often on their lips are the ones whose cause most of the discord, just as at present the Jura Bakuninists in Switzerland, who have provoked all the splits, clamour for nothing so much as for unity. These unity fanatics are either narrow-minded people who want to stir everything into one nondescript brew, which, the moment it is left to settle, throws up the differences again but in much sharper contrast because they will then be all in one pot... or else they are people who unconsciously... or consciously want to adulterate the movement. It is for this reason that the biggest sectarians and the biggest brawlers and rogues shout loudest for unity at certain times. Nobody in our lifetime has given us more trouble and has caused more quarrels than the shouters for unity."

FRIEDRICH ENGELS: LETTER TO BEBEL, JUNE 20 1873. Marx/Engels
Selected Correspondence p.266.

"The revolutionary Marxian party rejects not only the arbitrariness and bureaucratism of the Communist Party, but also the spurious and deceptive 'all-inclusiveness' of the Thomas-Tyler-Hoan Socialist Party, which is a sham and a fraud. Experience has proved conclusively that this 'all-inclusiveness' paralyses the party in general and the revolutionary left wing in particular, suppressing and bureaucratically hounding the latter while giving free rein to the right wing to commit the greatest crimes in the name of socialism and the party. The SWP seeks to be inclusive only in this sense: that it accepts into its ranks those who accept its programme and denies admission to those who reject its programme".

JAMES P CANNON: RESOLUTION ON ORGANISATIONAL PRINCIPLES
FOR THE APRIL 1940 CONVENTION OF THE SWP-USA. 'The
Struggle for a Proletarian Party', p.230.

"I have never put a low value on small organisations merely because they are small... The mass organisations have value precisely because they are mass organisations. Even when they are under patriotic reformist leadership one cannot discount them. One must win the masses who are in their clutches: whether from outside or from inside depends on the circumstance. Small organisations which regard themselves as selective, as pioneers, can only have value on the strength of their programme and of the schooling and steeling of their cadres. A small organisation which has no unified programme and no really revolutionary will is less than nothing, is a negative quantity."

LEON TROTSKY: OPEN LETTER TO AN ENGLISH COMRADE, April
3 1936.

"Without plumbing the gist of programmatic differences, he repeats commonplaces on the 'impossibility' of any one tendency 'claiming to incorporate in itself all truth'. Ergo? Live and let live. Aphorisms of this type cannot teach an advanced worker anything worthwhile; instead of courage and a sense of responsibility they can only instill indifference and weakness. Revolutionary ardour in the struggle for socialism is inseparable from intellectual ardour in the struggle for truth".

LEON TROTSKY: 'TROTSKYISM' AND THE PSOP. 'Trotsky on
France', p.245.

CONTENTS

<u>Introduction</u>	Argues that the DCF is an unprincipled combination politically, on issues like the Labour Party and the 'world Trotskyist movement'. It collects together people on the basis of an all-thought-out bag of grievances, but then lines them up politically with the Smith group.
<u>Part 1: Matters of Fact</u>	Examines the DCF's charges against us of 'bureaucratism', etc.
A. Expelled for their politics? ..	1
B. Tearing up the constitution? ..	1
C. The miners' strike	4
D. Like the trade union bureaucracy?	5
E. The committees	6
F. Expelling 'non-Marxists'	6
G. Minority rights	7
<u>Part 2: Who are the DCF?</u>	Analyses the different strands of opinion in the DCF, and shows that the dominant strand is committed to going with the Smith group.
<u>Part 3: The new faction is a bridge from the WSL to the Oxford group</u>	Shows that what the DCF platform says corresponds to this project of going with the Smith group. It condemns the WSL as utterly hopeless, and the reader needs only to dot the i's to conclude that the Smith group is the better option.
'Like the Spartacists'	1
'Crushing opposition'	1
'The last hope'	1
'A tiny, lifeless clique'	2
'A sectarian, bureaucratically-run organisation'	2
No life without Smith and Jones ..	2
'Virtually automatic endorsement from political acolytes'	3
'Not the slightest prospect that any minority will be tolerated' ..	3
'Anyone who disagrees could be thrown out'	3
'Discredited on the left... no better results to come'	4
<u>Part 4: The All-Inclusive Party</u>	This section, and sections 5, 5A, and 6, discuss the basic politics expressed or implied by the DCF documents. "The DCF pose a false alternative: either a catch-all party in which every faction are just as good Marxists as everyone else, or a narrow-minded sect. What we need is a party which guarantees broad democratic rights on the basis of a constant fight for scientific precision in politics and common discipline in action".
<u>Part 5: Neither sectarianism, nor philistinism, but Marxist politics</u>	The DCF leaders have retreated from any aspirations to Marxist clarity, to a notion that "there is a world Trotskyist movement with lots of rich and varied traditions, nearly all differences are misunderstandings, and one day it will all combine in one powerful movement, if only the sectarians will stop worrying
Prom Parsons to the DCF	1
Revolutionary politics and the truth	2
Inverted sectarianism	3
The 'world Trotskyist movement' ..	4
Ex-I-CL DCFers and the DCF's philistinism	4

<u>Part 5A. 'Unity-mongering'</u>	Oliver argues in IB 111 part 2 that the only real obstacle to revolutionary unity is bureaucratic internal regimes on the left. So: "loosen up the WSL's regime sufficiently, and we can reunite happily with the Smith group (and perhaps the IMG)". This section argues that this is a false and a-political approach to revolutionary unity.
'Unity' in 1977-8	1
What we said in 1978	2
Criteria for unity	3
Unity in 1968	4
 <u>Part 6. The general perspectives of the DCF</u>	Neither Smith, nor Smith plus the DCF, can build an organisation on the basis of demoralised political deference to the 'general Trotskyist movement'. So where can they go? This section argues that their most probable case is to collapse into the IMG.
The demoralisation of the Smith group	1
The options for the Smith group/ DCF	2
The IMG option	4
 <u>Part 7. The DCF's programme for reunification</u>	This section argues that the DCF's proposals, even if adopted, would not actually make a reunification with the Smith group possible.
The DCF proposals and the problems	2
 <u>Part 8. 'Mass expulsions' - the emotive language of political charlatanism</u>	This section, and sections 9 and 10, tidy up and further document some points from the previous sections.
Precedents	1
The Morrow group	2
 <u>Part 9. The DCF subscribes to the principle of deference to Smith. Afghanistan.</u>	
 <u>Part 10. Through the Looking Glass</u>	This section covers a number of points, including the DCF's proposals about the running of the paper.
The DCF's method of polemic	1
Real faults of the WSL are exploited demagogically	
Valid Criticisms	2
International work	2
Scurrilous criticisms are made under cover of high-sounding sentiment	
'Dignity' and Carolan-baiting	3
Leadership by local activity	3
The 'Holy Scrolls'	4
On at least two points the DCF condemns us for things which we did not do, but DCF members did do.	
The EC and full-timers	4
'Building the WSL'	4
The DCF proposals and centralism	
No 'line' between NCs?	4
The EC and the EB	5
Ideas which make no sense	
Balance sheet of fusion ...	5
Combatting the WSL 'bureaucrats'	5
What to do about the evil geniuses?	6
 <u>Part 11. Conclusion. What should the WSL do about the DCF?</u>	

INTRODUCTION: THE NEW FACTION IS A SPLINTER OF THE OXFORD FACTION

It happens that I am reading 'Alice in Wonderland' right now, for the first time. Reading through the DCF's platform, and re-reading IB 92, at the same time, more than once I have had to pull myself up short and remember that Lewis Carroll is dead and not a member of the WSL - and that the DCF want us to take them seriously.

Nevertheless the situation in the WSL now gets "curiouser and curiouser", as Alice might have said if Carroll and not Cunliffe, Levy, Parsons and Oliver were writing documents for the DCF.

* We have a faction which calls itself democratic centralist and yet it explicitly advocates a sort of federalism in which minorities in the WSL have almost the same rights in the public press as the organisation as a whole. There would be a constant stream of conferences/national aggregates every three or four months, so that no strong centralised leadership would be possible.

* We have a faction which calls itself democratic centralist, and yet it enshrines in its resolution for WSL conference an explicit recognition of a special position for Smith. The big majority of the organisation, including Cunliffe, Parsons, Oliver, and Gunther, is for Russian troops out of Afghanistan. But the DCF wants to ban even discussion in our press on this out of deference to Smith, who is against calling for Russian withdrawal. The DCF say at the same time that access to the public press for Smith's minority point of view is "a complex issue falling outside the historic norms of democratic centralism". For Smith is the measure of all things. (See part 9)

A faction like that has as little right to call itself democratic as to call itself centralist.

* We have a faction which calls itself the Democratic Centralist Faction, but properly speaking it does not even have the right to call itself a faction. It is an unprincipled combination.

It would be perfectly in order for people who disagree on the Labour Party to come together on an issue of democracy - provided that the issue was clearly defined, and they did not obscure the other political differences. It is utterly scandalous for them to come together on the question of the Labour Party. Yet the platform takes a position on the Labour Party.

"Sectarian regression... This degeneration of the regime runs hand in hand with (and itself compounds) a political degeneration of the League's leadership in a sectarian direction... our line in relation to the O. has increasingly dissolved into confusion and ambiguity, such as on our attitude towards B and our failure with regard to local government work".

* This faction platform which accuses the majority of "sectarian regression" on the Labour Party ^{paraphrasing} (because we are not prepared to merge the organisation uncritically into the left-reformist/centrist current around B, and we insist on a principled criticism of the 'local government left') at the same time denounces us for not running the paper as a 'party paper' and for carrying articles by labour movement dignitaries.

* The faction which accuses the majority of being sectarian on the Labour Party includes our sectarian opponents from last year (Cunliffe); the far 'right wing' of the organisation on the Labour Party question (Parsons); and people who have supported the majority line both on the Labour Party generally and on B and local government specifically! In short, representatives of every view in the whole political spectrum of the organisation have come together to denounce the politics of the majority (which some of them share!) as sectarian!

* We have a faction which thus talks out of both sides of its mouth on the Labour Party and yet remains completely silent about the strange antics of the Smith group on this question.

Half-sectarian himself on the LP (imprisoned by half-shed Healyite formulas from the '60s), and fronting for full sectarians, Smith spent much of 1982-3 denouncing us for being soft on the LP, "liquidating", etc. Now he leads a group which contains a hard opportunist right wing whose practice in local government would merit expulsion from any serious working class revolutionary organisation - Graham S and Hotchkiss.

Worse still, one of Smith's last acts in the WSL was to vote on the EC against expelling or publicly dissociating from Booth for crossing the class line by siding with the employer (the council) against the Islington building works department in a pay dispute. A few weeks earlier Smith had made overtures to Booth and convinced him that moves to ease him out of the organisation (without expelling him) were part of a factional drive against the Smith group.

When the Smith group accuse us of a "sectarian regression", is this the sort of thing they have in mind? And what can yesteryear's sectarian Cunliffe have in mind?

Parsons (in IB111) writes at length of the Booth affair. He has not a single word of disapproval for Booth crossing class lines, but bitter condemnations for Kinnell, Hill and me. He says we had an unprincipled sectarian plot to drive Booth out of the organisation, with Short "wheeled out" as our stooge. What do Gunther, Hedges, and Mellor, who demanded Booth's expulsion months ago, think about that?

How does the faction's charge that we represent a "sectarian regression" square with their denunciation of us in IB 92 for not having a party press which excludes articles by prominent reformists?

The explanation, of course, is that they all contributed their pet ideas and exchanged prejudices, and nobody had the wit to notice the contradictions or to try to iron them out.

* The faction also accuses us of being sectarian in relation to international work. This accusation is co-signed by the authors of both the diametrically opposing documents on 'The Crisis of the FI' at the February 1983 conference - Cunliffe (whose document we supported), and Parsons.

Parsons consistently argued that all the main strands of the 'world Trotskyist movement', Mandelites, Morenists, Lambertists and all, are basically revolutionary Marxist tendencies whose strengths outweigh their weaknesses. Cunliffe, it must be said, has moved closer to that view: in November last year he advocated we fuse with the USFI (though without any self-criticism of his previous position). A good many of the DCF signatories have never expressed any disagreement with the I-CL view that the USFI is centrist and currents like the Morenists and Lambertists are worse.

On this issue, too, the faction is an unprincipled combination.

* The faction's main rallying-cry is 'Democratise the WSL': its platform is written by Cunliffe, under whose regime in the old WSL Jo Q was denied access even to the IB!

The I-CL had a liberal attitude on minority access to its public press. The old WSL did not. Yet Cunliffe and Levy, who were central in the old WSL, make minority access to the public press one of their chief campaigning issues against people who were central in the I-CL.

* We have a situation in the WSL where the NC majority are branded as "splitters" for clearing out a faction that was paralysing the organisation and which had been operating a cold internal split, or internal secession, for nine months or a year. Those branded as splitters had made extravagant concessions to the minority to keep them in the organisation and integrate them into its work.

Who brands the majority as splitters and murderers of the fusion?

Cunliffe - who fought in the old WSL against the fusion, and who, by walking off the paper, broke the last remaining links of practical collaboration between the two segments of the WSL. Cunliffe, who in fact is firmly convinced that all the troubles of the Smith group in the last three years, and its disintegration, have been the inevitable consequences of the fusion, and are positive proof that he was right to oppose the fusion in the first place.

Cunliffe, who after walking off the paper, then wrote (in January) a document which, under the thinnest of disguises, advocated a split (IB 78).

Who else?

Oliver - the same Oliver who was the only member of the 1980-1 I-CL NC to advocate going into a predatory fusion with the old WSL.

"We can link up with the WSLers oriented to their practical work, as against the propagandist-minded..." (see IB 112).

Oliver, who proposed in summer 1981 that the I-CL NC throw out the fusion agreement.

And who else?

Parsons, who briefly resigned from the organisation in the summer of 1982 in protest at the antics of the RWL and others at the 1982 summer school - antics which they were able to indulge in because they were allied with the Smith group, which protected them.

Levy, who said this at the EC when Smith declared his faction after the April 1983 WSL conference:

"I'm not now in a position to defend the fusion because I can't defend functioning of leading bodies and conferences. The faction statement virtually ends the fusion."

He then retired from the EC because he lost faith in the ability of the organisation to survive.

In line with his general attitudes, Levy blamed us, not Smith, for the faction setting up. Nevertheless his assessment of the state of the organisation in April 1983 is of interest:

"It would be easy to put blame on the comrades who formed the faction. That would be an error. The factional motivation has come primarily from Carolan, Hill and Kinnell. That is not to brand those comrades as demons or indulge in character assassination which is now endemic - which I regard as a scandal, especially the way it has been cultivated by other leading comrades..."

"I don't see how the platform for the faction is coherent... But it has a logic. The new faction will compete with the IF - win over some of them - people who are reconciled to a split.

"Don't blame Smith and Jones. They have no alternative. Factionalism is natural to Carolan..."

"A lot of people see a breakdown of the fusion into factionalism. The attempts by Parsons just make things worse".

We fought to save the fusion as long as there was any chance of saving it. With the leaders of the DCF, their use of the banner 'Save the Fusion' now is for some intended to serve the purpose of recruiting people to go out with the Smith group; for others it expresses a vague resentment and discontent without a positive programme. All of them rally behind a contrived analysis of the crisis in the WSL which "forgets" what they themselves said and did only a short time ago.

Intro/4

The above by no means exhausts the list of absurdities and paradoxes in the position of the DCF.

Perhaps the worst of the absurdities is the topsy-turvy view of reality involved in blaming the NC for the split with the Smith group. This is the crudest of political frame-ups, perpetrated by active supporters of the Smith group (Cunliffe, Parsons, Levy, and, it becomes increasingly impossible to doubt, Oliver).

As I said at the NC when moving the expulsions on April 14, only in form were they expulsions. The split drive came from the Smith group, which refused to accept the verdict of last year's three conferences; which declared a faction in response to the April conference; and which responded to the August conference by escalating non-cooperation.

As long ago as last August Kinnell and I wrote an Internal Bulletin article warning that the Smith group was on a split trajectory (The Oxford Faction Threatens a Split, IB 70). But instead of splitting off completely they found it more convenient to secede internally, paralysing the organisation without leaving it.

One reason why events took this course was that we made so many concessions to the Smith group that they found it comfortable and profitable to remain in the WSL - and possible to do so despite their hostility and alienation because the organisation demanded so little of them in return for what it gave. Our concessions did not conciliate them and solve the organisation's problems: they merely gave them the option of behaving worse than ever knowing that they could eat their cake and have it.

Because it was to their factional convenience to remain in the WSL, at least for a while, the job of resolving the impossible situation fell to us, and the form of the break had to be the expulsion of the faction.

The main role of the DCF since the expulsion of the Smith group has been to misrepresent the issues grotesquely and try to insist that the split as a result of our attempt to sort out the WSL in March, and not from the preceding 12 months of factional disruption by the Smith group.

Despite the fact that the DCF platform expresses views on the Labour Party and on 'the International', the new faction presents itself chiefly as a politically disparate group, united primarily in opposing the expulsion of the Oxford group. Some of its members say that this is such an overriding issue that admitted differences between them on other questions do not count for anything right now. Psychologically, this attitude is probably what explains the signatures of a few otherwise honest people at the bottom of a lot of lying nonsense.

But the documents - the platform, and the document (IB 92) originally put out by 8 NC members, three of them members of the Smith group - present a different picture. The DCF is not just championing the claim that the Oxford faction has a right to stay in the WSL. It is championing the politics of the Oxford faction.

It endorses everything the Oxford faction says about the organisation - completely and uncritically. It has inherited, and enthusiastically adopted, most of the political stock-in-trade that the Oxford faction had used over recent months. The DCF goes into conference as the advocate of the 'Document of the 8' (IB 92), drawn up mainly by the Oxford faction. The DCF's platform adopts the Oxford faction's position on the problems of the new WSL, and the total and unshared responsibility of the elected majority leadership for all the League's problems (including, of course, those created when Cunliffe walked out of the paper to a well-paid job, and those created when he resigned as international secretary). The DCF adopts the Smith group's position totally, completely, uncritically, and even militantly. There is not one single word of criticism of the Smith group in the DCF platform, which is full of spleen and venom against the WSL majority. (Yes, against the majority, not just Kinnell and myself).

Everything is blamed on the majority. There is not the slightest hint that perhaps the Smith group had some - even a little - part of the responsibility for the deterioration of relations with the majority which culminated in their expulsion on April 14.

For Oliver and Parsons this is an especially heroic feat of self-brainwashing. These two went on record at the special conference of September 1982 that the initial responsibility for the recreation of two organisations lay with Smith and Jones: "It is difficult to escape the conclusion that the tendency comrades wish to polarise the situation in the movement" (IB 20). It was that "wish to polarise" that proved irreversible and reached its natural culmination in the separation of the Smith group from the WSL.

Yet the platform of the DCF is written by people whose fulsome support for the Smith group is unilluminated by even a hint that they are in any way politically independent of that group.

The case made by the DCF depends for any effectiveness it has on the repeated use of emotive terms like 'mass expulsions', 'bureaucratic methods', etc. These are propped up by their own (and Smith's) inventions and constructions on events. For example, the totally false assertions that the Smith group were expelled 'for their politics', 'without charges', 'without a hearing', etc., and the claim that we wish to expel all 'non-Marxists'.

They make no effort to relate to the facts and to the real events, real relationships, etc that make up the story which culminated in the suspension of the Smith group by the NC on March 31. Instead of 'independently' assessing the facts, the DCF takes over ^{the} nonsense of the Smith group.

What the new faction does; the role it plays in the WSL right now as the organisation fights to free itself from the parasitic grip of the Smith group; what it advocates; and the politics and organisational conceptions it bases itself on - these are the measure of what the DCF is.

This document will prove that it is no more than a splinter of the Smith group still in the WSL. The new faction is, in its politics, in its perspectives, in its leading personnel, and in the consciousness of its chief leading members at least, a by-product and an auxiliary of the Smith faction.

I will show below that the majority of the new faction are people who have at some time recently said that they will be going with Smith and Jones, or any-way out of the WSL, if they are defeated at conference. There is a minority of the signatories who may not know this or share these perspectives. On my calculation the absolute maximum number of such comrades is four out of 17.

Those few comrades have stumbled into something more than they bargained for. That is a pity. But right now that is their problem. Every comrade who signed the platform of the DCF and thereby endorsed IB 92 is very seriously at fault and has shown serious political disorientation. If any of them can be saved for revolutionary politics that is good, but as far as I am concerned it will not be by our side making any concessions to the ideas of the Smith group and the DCF,

Whatever is to be the fate of these two, three, four or more comrades, the important thing for the rest of the organisation right now is to be clear about what the DCF is and what it means for the WSL. The faction's platform and IB 92 give clear answers on this. We should be grateful to them for revealing themselves so clearly.

I propose to assess what is in their document and to discuss the main political issues, including what the organisation should do about "Smith's second eleven".

The new faction's platform document was mainly written, I understand, by Cunliffe. The comrades should have remembered the wise old saying, "Tell me your company and I'll tell you what you are". Tell me who is going to write your faction platform and I'll have a pretty clear idea of what the faction is.

As one would expect from Cunliffe, the document slips and slides and oscillates rather too loosely around the facts of recent events in the League. It relies a great deal on bombast and on words like "firm" (as in, "a faction based firmly on a platform of struggle for a Bolshevik... structure") inserted to bolster flabby sentences, rather like the late comrade Morrow used Cuban-heeled shoes to give himself a couple of extra inches.

A. Expelled for their politics?

The platform says that 36 were expelled "for the 'crime' of having belonged to a previously dissolved faction".

In no sense is this true. There were 35, not 36, and that is not what they were charged with.

The platform's account is even ridiculous as a 'hidden' explanation. If the Smith faction had dissolved, what reason would anyone have for wanting to expel them? If the new faction really believes that the old faction had dissolved, then why do they need to go on about defending the old faction's minority rights? What minority? They want it both ways.

The platform's account does not correspond to what we said about why we were expelling the Smith faction. It is not a possible unadmitted reason for expelling them, either.

The Smith faction were expelled because they refused to accept either the letter or the spirit of the March 10 NC's "last chance" resolution; because, in the opinion of the NC, they decided to pretend to dissolve and to go underground the better to work for objectives decided on at the national conference of the faction on March 25; because their intention was that it would be disruptive "business as usual".

B. Tearing up the constitution?

The new faction say that they are "up against a tightly-knit undeclared factional grouping which is prepared to tear up any and every (sic) clause in the constitution..." And again: "Now Kinnell and Carolan have succeeded in overturning the constitution in a series of brazen abuses of the rights of members".

Nothing the NC has done to the Oxford faction is outside the constitution. The Parsons-Levy-Cunliffe group subsists on loose talk and loose allegations that the expulsion was "undemocratic" and "unconstitutional". But a faction platform should be precise and specific, and if it isn't the suspicion inevitably arises that it can't be. The new faction can't be specific. Everything done against the Oxford faction was both constitutional and democratic, right down to complying with standing orders by raising the expulsion resolution under "matters arising from the minutes of the last meeting" on March 31. Everything shows that it is not possible on the facts to say that we were wrong constitutionally. All that those opposed to us can argue on the facts is that we were wrong politically - and that, of course, is the important question.

Instead of doing that, the comrades prefer to muddy the water and whip themselves into a hysteria of denunciation.

They try to be specific and to present the similitude of a hard 'factual' indictment. Work through it and analyse it, and you'll find that it indicts them as irresponsible demagogues. On some points you will be unable to avoid the conclusion that they are deliberately lying.

They cite the following evidence that we have overturned the constitution.

I: "36 members have been firstly suspended without notice, without being charged, with any breach of discipline, and without any right of a hearing; and

then summarily expelled two weeks later, still without charges, and still without a hearing. The sole basis of the expulsion of all 36 was their support for the positions of the faction, which was dissolved on March 25; in other words they were expelled for their political views. Every aspect of this procedure is in breach of the constitution..."

Many of the untruths in the platform are plainly wilful lies. Here I suspect there is also an element of hysteria: the comrades construe and define things - preposterously - to fit the needs of the case they want to make.

* The suspended and expelled members were given the notice of the proceedings against them that the constitution requires. The NC on March 31 gave them the required two weeks' notice.

* They were charged, as follows: "The March 10 resolution was the last chance to avoid an organisational break between the faction and the League. Their refusal to accept it leaves us only one option - the expulsion of the (now secret) faction from the WSL. It is time to put an end to this impossible situation - to recognise that there are in fact two organisations which cannot coexist in one shell, and therefore that we must separate.

"We therefore indict the members of the faction for failure to comply with the NC decision and for disruption of the League..."(IB 99)

* They were given a hearing. The faction's three members of the NC and its two close fellow-travellers Cunliffe and Levy participated, with votes, as full NC members, in a lengthy discussion of the proposal to suspend them on March 31. The faction's representative Smith was heard at length by the NC on April 14.

The March 31 NC resolution stated: "Any individual member of the faction who dissociates from the faction's reply to the NC resolution, and indicates a willingness to comply with that resolution, shall not be included in this decision". Before the April 14 NC the faction was informed: "Any comrade who wishes to dissociate himself/herself from the general faction position can be heard separately".

So if individuals were not adequately represented by the faction's chosen representatives, then they had the right to be heard separately. None of them chose to use that right.

If the new faction wants to argue that this procedure for dealing with a group facing disciplinary proceedings is unconstitutional, then they will have to explain why they themselves approved an identical procedure in the case of the 'Internationalist Faction' just one year ago.

* Where and by whom was it stated that "the sole basis" or any part of the "basis" for the expulsion of the 35 was their support for the political "positions" of the Oxford faction? This was not part of the indictment; nobody who spoke for the expulsion said anything about this; other facts prove that this could not have been our hidden motive (see above); we left Cunliffe and Levy inside the WSL; the NC resolution said: "Our objection to the faction is not its political views on various questions, but its disruption of the work of the League... We urge comrades who agree with the faction's politics yet are responsible about building the League to remain with the organisation on these terms".

* The Oxford faction did not dissolve on March 25. They chose to go out of the WSL as an organisation.

But the hub of the new faction's tissue of nonsense is the idea that the Oxford faction did not exist. Despite the conclusive evidence to the contrary, the new faction pretends that the Oxford faction had dissolved and therefore could not be taken as a unit. Instead of a representative expressing their common position, each member was entitled to be heard individually.

This is transparently dishonest. The Smith group has been a declared faction for 11 months. As an undeclared faction in April 1983 they had elected Smith, Jones, Cunliffe, Piggot, Hunt, Todd and James (nos.1,2,3,4,5,6,9 in their tightly-whipped factional list) to the NC as their representatives. Their pretence that

they had dissolved the faction was rejected by the NC before it moved against them. Their decision to go underground (when no-one had demanded, or could demand, of them that they dissolve the faction) was one of the central pieces of data which the NC took as proof that they rejected the March 10 NC resolution. (See IB 94).

More than that. Since March 31 they have plainly acted as a group in relation to the WSL. They met as a group on April 1. They came (perhaps 20 of them) as a group to the April 14 NC, to make a feeble Spartacist-like demonstration. They occupied the room where the NC was to meet and it took much shouting and insistence to drive them from the room. In the altercation Smith spoke for them as a group. But now the DCF say that it was unreasonable for us to have the same system for the hearing as the Smith faction chose for the altercation before the meeting started.

It was perfectly reasonable for the NC to insist that it would treat the grouping as a collective and hear only its representatives - with the explicit proviso that any individual who wanted to dissociate from the collective line could be heard separately.

As an item of unconstitutional activity by the NC, the procedure for the expulsions is significant only in proving the opposite of what the DCF want to prove.

What is this stuff written for? In part - and this is very important - the DCF write it for themselves. They tell themselves hyped-up stories and base themselves on silly constructions of events. They tell lies, like the deliberate lie that the faction was dissolved on March 25, and then draw conclusions from these like the preposterous idea that the faction was expelled for their political ideas. A number of members of the DCF are proof in person that it was not so!

Then, having proved to their own emotional satisfaction that there is a ban on political ideas, they go on to extrapolate the most dire scenarios for the future of the League. Each fantastic extrapolation or construction on events leads on to another. The steps in the ladder appear one after the other, projected out of their own emotions, as Levy and his comrades climb higher and higher into the air away from reality, like the Biblical Jacob saaling his ladder to heaven.

II: They say that on two occasions "the constitutional right of members to a special conference has been bureaucratically overruled".

Now strictly speaking the writers of the platform have an easy game to play here. They can stick to the literal truth - that a special conference is not being called - and use it to worry woolly-minded comrades by implying a big lie: that a conference is not being called. Of course we are having a conference, and with a full day devoted to those issues that the two petitions demanded a special conference for.

The DCF could try to make a point about the timing of the conference - where the NC went a month beyond the time-scale laid down by the letter of the constitution, saying quite honestly and bluntly that it was doing so, and justifying it politically by reference to the miners' strike. But the DCF make no reference to this specific point, or attempt to answer the political argument, at all.

The Cunliffe touch rather spoils this bit of the DCF platform for them. He sums up: "In total, close to 50% of the pre-expulsion WSL have now registered their demand for a conference to discuss the regime and the expulsions - and have had their constitutional rights vetoed by the NC majority". So what is it that we are going to have on June 30-July 1? (The figures are also a bit out. 47 signatures, one with a disclaimer dissociating from part of it, were received for the first petition, 32 for the second. Ten signed both, making a total of 69 different signatures, or rather less than 40% of the membership. It's not very important, except to show the DCF's reckless way with factual details).

Who are these lies aimed at? How is it that people who deserve to be considered honest have put their names to such nonsensical Cunliffe lies, Levy hysteria, and Oliver woolly-mindedness? At the very best this sort of stuff is a matter of weird constructions.

III: "The EC has attempted to intervene in and hinder the operation of the Control Commission, an independent body elected by and accountable to Conference as a guarantor of the rights of members".

The Control Commission is not "accountable to Conference"; the constitution says that it reports to the NC.

The EC did not attempt to "intervene in" or "hinder the operation of" the CC. The EC demanded of Smith that he go through proper procedures by (a) giving those against whom he was bringing complaints notice of the charges - he explicitly refused; (b) taking disputes to the EC first before he took them elsewhere. But all that was a matter between the EC and Smith.

Copies of all the correspondence between the EC and Smith, and between the EC and the CC, can be made available to any comrade who sends a stamped addressed envelope.

I have comments to make about the behaviour of the three comrades who make up the CC, one of whom, Sanders, was a member of the Smith faction. But that will be in a separate document. (And similar comments were made by all the EC - Smith faction and DCF members included - about the method of approach of the CC in the one previous case it had referred to it).

IV: "In defiance of the Constitution, the EC and NC majority have introduced a system of summary fines which... are the exclusive prerogative of cde Kinnell as treasurer".

A decision to impose fines on comrades who delayed repeatedly and unreasonably in returning new dues assessments was made by the OSC - including Levy - on October 28 1983. In November 1983 the whole membership was informed of this through IB 76. No-one found it unreasonable or out of order.

An outcry began only when members of Smith's and Jones's branch were fined. Far from being "summary" or sudden-death, these fines came after four months of repeated reminders about the new dues rates. The amount involved was £1 per member. They could of course appeal (and since a fine, unlike a suspension or an expulsion, remains un-executed pending an appeal, an appeal is in substance as good as a hearing in this case). In the event the NC voted to waive the fines on the Oxford factory members because of problems about whether all the reminders had got through to them (though the fault behind those problems lay with the branch treasurer rather than the centre).

And this is an atrocious attack on the rights of the members? Really? The fact is that in the past we have imposed all sorts of small fines and levies (e.g. at conference, for being late for conference sessions), and no-one started screaming about bureaucratic despotism. No-one would have started screaming in this case - except that it suited the Smith faction to try to "make an issue" of it and present themselves as bureaucratically oppressed.

The four points above are the total of the weighty indictment on which the DCF base their wild charges ("a tightly-knit, undeclared factional grouping which is prepared to tear up any or every clause in the Constitution... Carolan and Kinnell enjoy similar control over the positions and work of the WSL to that of any trade union General Secretary over even the most bureaucratised union... methods of Healy, the Spartacists and the RWL...", etc.)

How many untruths - big, small, explicit, implicit, by omission or by commission - can you count in their four points? They really should do better...

C. The miners' strike

The platform accuses us of wilfully refusing to let a united WSL go through the miners' strike. "Rather than seeing the first major class battle since the fusion as an ideal opportunity to test and strengthen the organisation in struggle, it is used as an excuse to weaken it".

Here too, the loose talk on which the new faction subsisted in its incipient

stage is crystallised in the platform into a hard and barefaced lie.

The Oxford faction made it impossible by their agitation for the WSL to go through the experience of the miners' strike as a united organisation. (Though they have much less weight and no comparable capacity to cripple the organisation, the leaders of the new faction continue the work of the Oxford faction here). The Oxford faction greeted the revival of working class militancy with a shoal of organisational/internal scandal-mongering through their IBs (and Parsons'), and the proposal that the WSL should devote itself to internal gang warfare for two months leading up to a special conference. The conference that they proposed would certainly have culminated in a split. (See 'Gunther and Oliver - who know not what they want', in IB 114).

The Oxford faction had given notice of their attitude to the WSL's work in major class battles during the NGA dispute (see IB 90). Between December and March that attitude had hardened and become more intense.

D. Like the TU bureaucracy?

The platform, following Smith and Jones, says that: "the method of the leadership follows the familiar lines of bureaucracies elsewhere in the labour movement... decision-making is the prerogative of one or two key people, relying on virtually automatic endorsement from political acolytes at lower levels in the apparatus... Carolan and Kinnell enjoy similar control over the positions and the work of the WSL to that of any trade union General Secretary over even the most bureaucratised union."

More loose talk in the style of Smith and Jones, again crystallised into hard and deliberate lies by inclusion in the platform, although in this passage 'softened' by the ridiculous slapstick style. "Similar control... to that of any trade union General Secretary"! Frank Chapple? Really?

The tell-tale phrase is the jibe about "political acolytes" (and elsewhere in the platform, "handraisers"). The DCF is for democracy. It is 101% for democracy. But when it comes up against the fact that the majority is the majority - that the people they object to have been elected to the NC by conference, the policies and decisions they object to have been supported by conference and by the elected NC - they solve the problem by branding the membership "acolytes" and "handraisers".

The DCF's tirade is not even internally coherent. Trade union bureaucracies do not rule through a system of "political acolytes". It is not dogmatic ideological conviction that ties their supporters to them! The mechanisms of trade union bureaucratism can be precisely specified, and none of them apply to the WSL.

- * The bureaucrats are elected for life or for long terms of office.

- * They have tremendous material privileges, which give them an upper hand directly and also create for them a network of support - not "political acolytes" but careerists.

- * They rely heavily on (and work to sustain) the apathy, in normal times, of a large proportion of the union membership. In this they are helped by the fact that all the influences of the wider society - and in particular the media - are on the bureaucrats' side against militant left-wing opposition. Thus the use of such methods as the postal abllot.

- * The bureaucrats' position is protected by a whole system of rules, standing orders, procedural regulations, etc. - ranging from the crudity of the ISTC, where until very recently the conference could take no policy decisions and not long before that there were no conferences at all, through the NUT or CoHSE (the platform simply declares decisions on nuclear disarmament, or abortion rights, out of order), to more subtle forms.

None of these factors exist in the WSL. The EC and the League functionaries are open to re-election every six weeks or so by the NC. The NC is elected democratically by annual conference, and will be re-elected within a few weeks. There

are no material privileges, just the opposite. The manipulation of inactive members to win votes without winning arguments has been a method of the Smith faction rather than of the majority (cf. The September 1982 special conference, where the Smith' group's victory was achieved by the votes of people who had no known political activity for or financial contribution to the WSL before or after that conference). The influence of our immediate environment, i.e. general left public opinion, has been generally on the Smith group's side (so has the influence of the bourgeois media, via its role in building up Smith as a celebrity). The WSL constitution, adopted unanimously by us all three years ago, is democratic.

The sort of undemocratic regime enforced by "political acolytes" is not that of a trade union, but rather of a religious-type sect or cult. (Some, eg. Stalinist, organisations can combine features of both). But how do things stand in that respect? The nearest thing to a cult figure inside the organisation has been Smith. The bible-thumping and heresy-hunting has come from the Smith group, not the majority.

E. The committees

"Political decision-making in the League has been shifted (sic) to successively more select (sic) and tiny committees".

The committees are the NC, EC and OSC, the bodies established at fusion. It is a straight lie that any one of these committees in fact takes decisions beyond its delegated power. Levy, who sits on the most "select" of these committees, the OSC, knows very well he tells a lie. Or if not, why hasn't he been taking the out-of-order decisions of the OSC to the EC or NC for rectification?

Again: the comrades should shut up or put up chapter and verse. Which committees have taken what decisions that properly should have been taken at a higher or broader level? When? Why didn't they protest at the time?

Moreover, it is a typical piece of hysteria to talk of select committees when the Oxford minority had large overrepresentation on both the EC and the OSC.

F. Expelling 'non-Marxists'?

The platform says: "Worse still is the theory now being advanced by Kinnell to rationalise the expulsions. The minority, he declares, deserved to be expelled, because 'they are not Marxists'."

No he doesn't! When and where did he 'declare' this? The origin of this is a conversation between Levy and Kinnell. How, Levy wanted to know, could we justify taking action against such fine revolutionaries as Smith and Jones? How could the organisation be viable without them? They may be sincere and talented revolutionaries, replied Kinnell, but the trouble is that they are not Marxists. They do not have a stable political compass. Therefore they got disoriented and became more and more blindly disruptive...

But Levy operates by re-defining things so that he strikes the right emotional chord in himself. Here he has built another Jacob's/Levy's ladder in the air. At the NC on April 14 Kinnell said that Smith, Jones and Cunliffe held views which are not Marxists but populist, Third-Worldist etc., and that they themselves are bad Marxists or not Marxists at all. Ah ha, cried Levy: You want to expel them because they are not Marxists, do you? You want to be the Pope who defines people as non-Marxist, and expels those who are not Marxists. Nobody is safe...

Now Levy's typically silly, typically hysterical construction appears enshrined in the platform - attributed to Kinnell!

The short answer would be that there are comrades who are "not Marxists" - Levy for example - who are still in the organisation. For on every political issue bar the Labour Party that we have disputed over the 32 months of fusion, Levy's role in the leading committees has been to help derail the discussion and make it impossible with such Jacob's ladder - essentially hysterical - constructions, which lack sense, balance and proportion. What happens is that the current of

emotion is allowed to run along whatever chain of abstract logic is most suited to express it and give the desired conclusion. Critical judgment, and even a sense of proportion, get their fuses blown out.

No, comrade Levy, this does not mean that I want you out of the organisation and can be assumed to have a motion to that effect ready for the next NC; nor that I wish to have the power to expel anyone whose logical constructions I think silly.

G. Minority Rights

The platform defines itself as defending and/or fighting to establish 'minority rights'. This is not just a reference to the DCF's eclectic proposal to write into the constitution minority right of access to the press. They want to imply that the expulsion of the Smith group was a violation of minority rights.

Here as throughout the document, what is said is linked to other statements on which its truth or lack of truth depends. If what they say about the Smith group being expelled for its political views were true, then there would be an issue of minority rights to bring before the membership. There would in fact be a real and very important case - as opposed to the DCF's spurious case - of a breach of the constitution. But I have shown above that what they say about the expulsion being for the Smith group's political views is flagrant nonsense.

It is simply a lie to say or imply that the expulsion of the Smith group raises any question of the legitimate political rights of minorities. No minority has the right to do what the Smith group did - to refuse to accept the verdict of repeated conferences that they were the minority; to refuse to work under the direction of the leading committees; to attempt to subordinate the organisation to their own factional concerns, even during the miners' strike; etc. etc.

Some of the DCF - Armstrong and Oliver, for example - might have a half-formed notion in their minds somewhere that the expulsion of the Smith group will have similar consequences for the WSL that the expulsion of Workers Fight had for IS/SWP. That expulsion marked the decisive turning point in the bureaucratisation of the IS/SWP.

But WF was expelled (at a special conference!) with IS passing a resolution explicitly ruling out opposition formations which had a full alternative platform to that of the existing leadership. We were not indicted for indiscipline, disruption, or making it impossible to run the organisation. (Some accusations of that sort were thrown in, but they were not the stated motivation for the expulsion). The background to the expulsion was not an organisational or disciplinary dispute, but a political dispute, over the EEC. We were a rather isolated minority.

IS's general resolution on factions defined, limited and narrowed down what oppositions could do. It enshrined massive political privileges for the entrenched leadership, and thereby gave it a big measure of freedom to purge and cauterise the organisation against any political challenge. It licensed the leadership to go ahead and bureaucratised the organisation, and they did.

Nothing similar is happening in the WSL or can be made to happen as a consequence of the NC, after two years of conciliating them, deciding that the Smith faction is unacceptably disruptive.

PART 2: WHO ARE THE D.C.F.?

At the May 5 National Committee meeting the new faction's five just men were asked to explain what their perspectives were in the light of their platform.

When asked what reason the meeting had not to take the platform as a declaration of intent to split unless the conference goes their way, they gave varying responses.

Parsons was the only one who gave a logically coherent 'reason' why the platform should not be seen as a split manifesto and an ultimatum to the conference. They did not intend to split, he said, because they would carry the day at the conference (and perhaps Carolan and a small group around him would then split). None of the others said that they shared Parsons' 'expectation' that they would carry the conference. All of them denied a split perspective, Cunliffe least convincingly of all.

Now the DCF are not politically or psychologically a homogeneous group, nor even are the five NC members. Their documents prove how far they are from being clear-headed. I take it as pretty certain that a number of people who put their names on the document did not do so with the intention to split. People do not always read things very carefully, and the author or main author of a platform can give it a tone and even an explicit content that is not truly or fully representative of the group or of everyone in it.

Nevertheless, whatever their intentions, these 17 comrades have put their names under a document which, beyond reasonable doubt, must for those who believe it says imply split at the conference if they lose. And their chances of not losing are pretty small.

There are at least three distinct strands of opinion among the signatories, but what the platform means is that the political and ideological hegemony is held by those who consciously have a split perspective. Some of the signatories have got themselves unintentionally trapped behind Cunliffe, Parsons and Levy, who set the tone of the DCF platform.

Let us try to identify the visible strands of opinion among the signatories.

A: There are comrades who have said at some stage that they will go with the Oxford group if there is a definitive split. Some of them, like Cunliffe, agree with the Oxford group politically; others do not. But all, for whatever reason, have a basic commitment to the Oxford group. These are:

Parsons, Cunliffe, Hedges, McInnis, Paul, Quelch, Thomas, Levy.

Parsons, in effect, reaffirmed his commitment to go with the Oxford group at the May 5 NC - except, he said, that the split had not yet happened, and he thought he would win at the conference.

In my open letter to a comrade who signed the petition against expelling the Oxford faction (IB 110), I said that Levy had been telling people to join the Oxford group if they were not reinstated. This was not quite true.

Levy did not explicitly advocate that people should join the Oxford group. What Levy did say was that after the split the only hope for a democratic group capable of political and organisational development lay with the Smith group. He left his hearers to dot the i's. He made it clear (to Picton) that he himself would go with the Smith group. When Hill reported this at the May 5 NC, Levy did not deny it, though he had gone to great trouble to establish that he had not explicitly urged comrades to go off and join the Smith group after the conference. When asked directly about his own plans, he said he would 'consider his position' after the conference if he lost there.

B: There are two comrades who have said at some stage that they will leave the WSL, probably to drop out of revolutionary politics, if there is a split with the Oxford group: Mellor and Armstrong.

Armstrong told me this on May 4. At the London aggregate on May 20 Mellor indignantly denied having ever said he would leave revolutionary politics. He would take his word for it. But during the dinner break he told me that what he had said was that he would drop out of the WSL, not out of revolutionary politics...

C. When his branch discussed the split at its earliest stage - before the suspensions and expulsions - Gunther said he was staying with the WSL if there was a split.

D. The others are not so easy to categorise.

Bryan M and Kath M are in Oxford and work closely with Levy. The chances that these comrades will not go to the Smith group must be pretty low.

Kirby (Leicester) has been probably more on the Oxford faction's political wavelength than the majority's.

Gaines and Williams are long-time WF/I-CL members who have been with the majority in the political disputes over the last 2½ years. Gaines has said that she has no intention of leaving the organisation.

Oliver is the joker in the pack. According to Parsons, before March 10, Quelch, Parsons, Thomas, and (so Parsons said) Oliver had discussed what they would do if the WSL and the Oxford group split, and all four decided to join the organisation set up by the Smith faction. I heard a rumour, so I asked Parson about it, and he told me that four members had decided to go with Smith. Then I asked Oliver, and he denied it.

At the NC meeting on May 5 Parsons indignantly accused me of unjustly attributing the intention to split only to him. Why, he said, didn't I say that Oliver had also decided to join the Oxford faction? So I said: "Because I asked Oliver about it and he denied it". Oliver was silent... Me, I believe Parsons on this. Psychologically Oliver has burned most of his boats.

Of course, people may declare an intention and then change their minds.

One final element needs to be brought into this picture. Before the whole NC on March 31 Smith said that there were either three or four Oxford faction members whose names we did not have and who would thus escape the disciplinary action and remain in the WSL. Now Smith is capable of having got it all muddled up, and of being mistaken, or simply exaggerating. (On March 10 he claimed to have 51 signatures for a special conference. Three weeks later he had 47...) However, if Smith was right, and telling the truth, there are secret members of the Oxford faction still operating in the WSL.

So, of the 17:

8 have said that they will go with the Smith group, and two others that they will leave the WSL. 10 out of the 17 have declared that they are leaving the WSL if they lose at the conference.

To these must be added Oliver, Kath M and Bryan M as very probably in the same political dustbin. So 13 out of 17 are probably going out of the WSL if they lose the vote at conference.

With such a composition, there is little mystery about the contents of the platform and the perspectives implied in it. Those who at some time have said that they intend to join the Oxford faction or to drop out of revolutionary politics are a majority in the DCF of at least 13 out of 17. A clear majority are convinced that if they lose at the conference, then it's 'good night WSL'. Individuals' minds can be changed. There is no reason to doubt that the bulk of them mean it and will act accordingly.

PART 3. THE NEW FACTION IS A BRIDGE FROM THE WSL TO THE OXFORD GROUP

3/1

Some members of the new faction - Parsons, for example - have said very plainly that they intend to go with the Oxford group. Levy and others, however, wax indignant at the suggestion that they are, explicitly or implicitly, telling members of the WSL to leave and join Smith if Smith is not allowed back into the WSL by the conference.

In fact many statements in the platform make it plain that nobody who has read it carefully and absorbed and accepted what it says will want to remain in the WSL after they lose at the conference. All that is absent is the explicit statement that they would be better off in the Smith group. Perhaps the DCF members could not all agree to add this concluding letter Z to the alphabet they jointly spell out.

The list of quotations that follows is long and tedious, but going through it will leave little room for doubt in anybody's mind about what the DCF are saying.

1: "Like the Spartacists..."

In the first paragraph they make things pretty plain: "... the question of minority rights, democratic centralism and the internal organisation of the League is and remains a central political question. [Emphasis original] For the NC majority, some of whom have tried to downgrade its importance, the question of the party regime is now seen as sufficiently a matter of principle to justify mass expulsions. For those of us opposed to such methods, the issue of the party regime is also a matter of principle - without which it is impossible, no matter how formally correct may be the League's programmatic positions, to build a healthy organisation. By adopting the methods of mass expulsions, the NC majority has deserted the method of Lenin, Trotsky and Cannon and embraced instead the bankrupt methods of Healy, the Spartacists and the RWL." [Second emphasis added]

And it's for sure such an organisation has no future. It is richly ironic that former close comrades-in-arms of the RWL - who helped Smith defend them while they built up their faction in the WSL - now link them with the Spartacists. But what the platform says is plain: if the DCF doesn't win at the conference, the WSL will on a central "matter of principle" be non-Marxist, non-Bolshevik, and like "Healy, the Spartacists and the RWL".

2: "Crushing opposition..."

They say that, because the majority of the NC met privately once to prepare for the ejection of the Oxford group at the March 31 NC, the existing leadership of the organisations is "a tightly-knit, undeclared factional grouping which is prepared to tear up any or every clause in the constitution in order to crush organised opposition and secure its own political objectives". And after the next conference you wouldn't want to be alone with such people, would you? If that is the alternative, then the hope of the future must lie with the demoralised and passive rump of the old WSL round Smith.

3: The last hope?

Therefore, the DCF say, they are a "faction, based firmly [my emphasis] on a platform of struggle for a Bolshevik, democratic centralist structure and against the sectarian, bureaucratic degeneration [my emphasis] which has brought the WSL and its leadership to the present state of dire crisis".

Naturally they are based "firmly" on the platform! Naturally it is a "platform of struggle"! And if they lose that struggle? Galloping, irreversible "sectarian bureaucratic degeneration". And you will note, comrade, that the whole responsibility for the 'crisis' lies with the WSL leadership, and no part of it with the Oxford faction and their long-time fellow-travellers like Cunliffe, Levy and Parsons. If in form (and perhaps in the minds of some of its members who have not fully absorbed what they have put their names to) the DCF is a middle grouping between the WSL and the Smith group, in substance it is 100% with the Smith group.

It is not actually said that the Smith group is the only hope, but it is clearly implied. For, of course, the DCF do not expect to win at the conference. All their 'extreme' statements, all the exaggerated language in which they make their (dishonest) accusations, point the serious supporters of the DCF out of the WSL after the conference of "handraisers" and "acolytes" rejects their proposals.

4: "A tiny, lifeless clique..."

"In taking the decision to join a revolutionary Marxist organisation, militants look to build not a tiny, lifeless clique of polemicists and propagandists [emphasis mine]... (but to) reach out to recruit, educate and mobilise thousands and hundreds of thousands of workers" [emphasis mine]

So which side of this historic division are you going to be on, comrade? Are you now, have you ever been, or do you want to be part of a "tiny, lifeless clique of polemicists and propagandists"? If you feel you are, comrade, then you surely won't want to continue like that, will you? You are not "lifeless", are you? You want to "reach out to recruit, educate, mobilise thousands and hundreds of thousands of workers"? Of course you do!

(And you won't be so impolite as to point out that the Smith group, which began with "200 expulsions" from the WRP and had massive advantages in the mid-'70s, is not organising hundreds of thousands, or thousands, or hundreds or even dozens of workers, but is a small demoralised rump incapable of functioning as a propaganda group, whose best hope, if it has any hope, is to fuse with one or another segment of the about-to-split Socialist Action).

The rhetoric here, too, is dependent for even superficial credibility on the lie that the WSL will not tolerate political minorities and that the Oxford faction was expelled for its politics and not for disruption. The DCF say that unless an organisation can tolerate differences, it cannot develop into a mass organisation. That's absolutely true, but it has no bearing on the WSL as it exists in reality. It is only in the self-deluding fantasy world of the DCF leaders that the WSL does not tolerate political minorities.

Then the DCF comes to the pay-off:

"If this is not solve when an organisation is small, there is little chance it will ever become large; nobody can seriously imagine a mass-based workers' party with the ideological homogeneity of a small faction..."

There is a revealing slide from one concept to another here: from the justified demand for room for minorities (which is not in question), to a positive insistence that there must be minorities (no "ideological homogeneity"!) if the organisation is to be healthy. But more on this later. The immediate point is that for the DCF the test of whether the WSL is a "lifeless clique" or not is the readmission of Smith and Jones.

5: "A sectarian, bureaucratically-run organisation..."

"... the rump Workers' Socialist League can only be seen as a sectarian, bureaucratically-run organisation..." And you don't want to let sectarian bureaucrats run your political activity, do you, comrade?

6: No life without Smith and Jones

The party-building norms of Lenin, Cannon, etc., are, the DCF says, "... quite the opposite of the present internal norms and methods implemented by the present majority leadership of the WSL... the restoration of a healthy regime in the WSL demands the reinstatement of the expelled comrades".

And if they are not reinstated? You are not foolish enough to think that the WSL can live without Smith and Jones, are you, comrade? Only Smith and Jones are capable of organising "hundreds of thousands of workers" for the WSL. Smith and Jones carry the proletarian character of the WSL in their pockets. If they

are not reinstated, a regime "quite the opposite of the party-building norms of Lenin and Cannon" will thereby prove itself to be entrenched and unreformable. By way of regicide against Ed Smith, the WSL will have lost its proletarian character.

7: "Virtually automatic endorsement from political acolytes..."

This is the picture the DCF paint of the WSL now. Some of it we have already quoted, but it will bear repetition.

"The type of regime defended by the NC majority's vote for expulsions is the opposite of democratic centralism. Although the WSL is... a small^{and} crisis-ridden organisation, the method of the leadership follows the familiar line of bureaucracies elsewhere in the labour movement... rank and file committees [??] are consulted only in so far as they are controllable; decision-making is the prerogative of one or two key people, relying on virtually automatic endorsement from political acolytes at lower levels in the apparatus [emphasis added]... Carolan and Kinnell enjoy similar control over the positions and the work of the WSL to that of any trade union General Secretary over even the most bureaucratised union."

You had better do something about that, comrade - quick. You see, it isn't just rotten at the top - acolytes, otherwise known as handraisers, at all levels in the organisation give the dastardly duo automatic endorsement. What hope is there for such an organisation if the handraisers and acolytes at all levels have a majority in the conference and after the conference? You have to recognise then that there is no hope in the WSL - unless you are an acolyte and a handraiser yourself.

8: "Not the slightest prospect that any minority will be tolerated..."

Don't think that the passages already quoted from the DCF platform are merely loose exaggeration. "This is no passing phase of internal life in the WSL. It is the model of the party regime which the expulsions are designed to reinforce. [emphasis original] If the expulsions are upheld, there is not the slightest prospect that any subsequent organised, vocal minority will be tolerated, or that the membership will ever have any real voice in the decision-making of the WSL in the months and years to come [emphasis added]." The experience of this bureaucratic expulsion will shape the whole existence of the WSL from now on". For Smith is the measure of all things...

So you thought that the great period of emphatic, confident, sweeping, soaring Marxist prophecy was over? Here we have comrades with no doubts at all. They burn their boats against retreat, nail their colours to the mast so that they cannot be struck in surrender, and kill their horses before the forthcoming battle at the conference so that no faint-hearts can panic and run away.

The WSL is now "a sectarian, bureaucratically-run organisation", which the rest of the Left rightly regards with disdain - it is "far from offering any example to the British left or the international movement". If the DCF do not win at conference, then there is no hope of anything at all. They will win or die at the conference. They will win or go out of the WSL. That is the message. The chief leaders of the DCF must understand it well, even if all those who have put their names to the platform do not.

9: "Anyone who disagrees could be thrown out..."

On the basis of Levy's construction that Kinnell has justified throwing out the Smith faction on the grounds that he does not think they are Marxists, the DCF reach this conclusion:

"After all, if you are the only Marxists, then anyone who disagrees must be a non-Marxist. Non-Marxists don't belong in a revolutionary party - so anyone who disagrees should be - or could be, if they argue too much for their positions - thrown out. The outlook is pretty bleak for any future possible oppositions in the WSL".

The Spirit of Historic Development will pack her bags and go to Oxford to

help Smith write his memoirs. And after Smith and Jones, Darkness will reign permanently at G. Street...

10: "Discredited on the left... no better results to come..."

Concluding, the DCF say that the WSL is "discredited on the left in Britain and internationally". It has "succumbed to the disease of sectarianism". And; "Only an idiot would believe that these same bankrupt methods can produce any better results in the years to come".

And - even if the majority at the conference should prove themselves to be incorrigible "sectarian idiots" - you are not a sectarian idiot, are you, comrade? And by now you have got the message, haven't you?

* * * *

PART 4: THE "ALL-INCLUSIVE PARTY"

No evidence is offered by the DCF for their assertion that we are "discredited on the left". Yet their tremendous concern for acceptability to broad left public opinion is characteristic of a serious political trend in the DCF.

The entire political content of what they say on minorities within the organisation is anti-Bolshevik. They write: "Nobody can seriously imagine a mass-based workers' party with the ideological homogeneity of a small faction". Hasn't the DCF ever heard of the Bolshevik party? That party, when it became a mass-based party, had a high degree of homogeneity which did not exclude full democratic rights for people with differences within it. Hasn't the DCF ever reflected on the idea that the building of a revolutionary party is not a process of building an ever-wider coalition of ever-more-diverse tendencies, but a constant struggle for political clarification and homogenisation? A party can become broader and richer in the numbers and the experience that it embraces, and simultaneously more homogeneous ideologically.

And haven't the comrades pondered the experience of... the old WSL? That was an organisation which numerically never got beyond the stage of being a small faction, and ideologically never attained the homogeneity of a small faction. That, in my opinion, is one reason why it fell apart.

The DCF conflates two very different things, losing the essential distinction that separates them. It collapses the question of democracy within a democratic-centralist Marxist party - the right of tendency and faction, the neutrality of the party machine during internal political disputes, etc. - into the question of the relation of widely different groups which cannot relate to each other within a democratic-centralist framework.

Implicitly here - and more explicitly in the 'Document of the Eight' - they advocate not democracy within a democratic-centralist framework but the breaking-up of any such democratic-centralist framework so as to organise coexistence of disparate 'Trotskyist' groups incapable of bonding together in a Bolshevik democratic-centralist framework. If Levy's repeated talk about a new sort of party regime, different from 'the sectarian Trotskyist tradition', means anything, it is this. If his idea of the 'equality' of different tendencies within the organisation - right and wrong, majority and minority - is at all thought through, it is the opposite of a Bolshevik fight for political precision.

I believe that - with the possible exception of Parsons, who is a federalist and who consciously lies when he puts his name to the platform comments on James P Cannon (whom he openly detests) - the DCF simply do not know what they are doing here. Nevertheless what they in fact revert to is the idea - long discredited among revolutionary Marxists - of the all-inclusive party.

The difference is of fundamental importance. For there are limits to the degree of all-inclusiveness possible to even the most democratic of democratic-

centralist parties. Those limits arise out of one of the basic ideas of democratic centralism - that there is a central party line, which guides what the party does, including what any minority does, under a centralised regime. There has to be a party line, control of what each member does by the central committees, subordination of all minorities to whatever decisions are taken by the party as a whole. Otherwise you have a gaggle of socialists, not a combat party capable of preparing and leading the socialist revolution.

Within this democratic-centralist model you can get the sort of relaxed liberal attitude to minority opinions that the WF/I-CL tendency had. There can be a wide scope for access to the public press for minorities. However, the limiting fact is that the tendency of all such public equality of the organisation and its minorities in the press must be to undermine the possibility of a clear and unambiguous expression of the party's position. Beyond a certain point public freedom for minorities would destroy the revolutionary centralism of the organisation.

To write into the constitution the right of minority access to the press is explicitly to destroy the democratic centralist character of the party and to make it into some sort of federation. The history of our own ^{WF/I-CL} tendency shows that it is possible to contain wide political differences provided that all those involved agree on and stick to democratic centralist rules. Splits come, as with the Smith group, when such agreed rules of functioning cannot be established or break down.

Organisations break down for all sorts of political reasons, or because of personal or other conflicts. That is what actually happens, deplorable though it is. What the DCF proposes is to change the rules to avoid such divisions by abandoning democratic centralism - the organisation of the party as a centralised single unit. Instead of provisions for differences that arise in the course of building the Bolshevik-type combat party which all modern history shows to be irreplaceable for working class revolution, they are in fact discussing a different type of organisation.

In fact the DCF's proposals would not avoid a split with the Smith group. Nothing in the world could reconcile the Smith group to remaining very long within an organisation whose politics they "fundamentally" repudiated on every major question, whose leadership is "worse than the trade union bureaucracy", and which no Trotskyist world-wide "will touch with a barge-pole". All the DCF's proposals could provide for is a period of paralysis and gang warfare - conferences every three/four months! - before the inevitable split. The leaders of the DCF must know that. Yet in their attempt to present a plausible 'case', they take up pre-Bolshevik and anti-Bolshevik ideas of organisation.

In their model you have no party line - or no party line that is binding on anyone, least of all the leaders. The organisation has as many public faces as there are groups and tendencies within it. There is inevitably a babble of voices rather than a clear political line. Which voice is loudest is determined by the public prestige of different leaders. Instead of clear political distinctions and accounting, you get the politics blurred.

In fact every such party known to history - whether it be Norman Thomas's Socialist Party USA, within which the Trotskyists worked in the mid '30s, or Tony Cliff's 1960s IS, within which WF worked - has been subjected to more or less undemocratic rule by dominant groups or cliques. They have not even preserved the all-inclusive unity they said was central to their organisation. Every time the logic of political struggle and the pressure of political events intruded to break up these cosy worlds based on illusions.

Instead of 'all-inclusiveness' allowing maximum growth, it prepares splits and disruptions. Only a politically coherent formation bound together by firm rules of democratic-centralist functioning is capable of growing into a mass party based on the Bolshevik model. On that basis it is possible to have a liberal regime for minorities which agree to operate the democratic-centralist constitution and to have discussions without disruption and without irresponsibility towards the organisation's work in the class struggle.

The second wave of Spartacists in the old WSL was expelled for 'no longer having significant agreement with the political line or orientation' of the organisation. It is inconceivable that a proposal to expel ^{revolutionaries} for their political ideas could have come from the former leadership of the I-CL, though we gave our one and only Spartacist colonist very short shrift (immediate expulsion as a supporter of a hostile group).

This question neatly encapsulates the differences between the Smith group and us on the conception of the party. They are devotees of an all-inclusive, organisationally broken-backed party. We follow Trotsky and Cannon in categorically rejecting such a notion. On the other hand we want maximum internal freedom and recognise it as a fact of life that wide and comprehensive political differences arise on a common basis. We let the functioning of the organisation determine the range of differences. So long as they can continue to function together on the basis of defined majorities and minorities, and agreed democratic-centralist rules of functioning, people with a very wide range of political differences can work together in a Trotskyist party. For example, 11 years ago a segment of WF developed for a brief while what were very close to explicit syndicalist politics. There were open and frank discussions. People tried for sharp definitions and self-definitions. It all remained essentially friendly and constructive, without factions or splits.

The DCF are quite right that for an organisation to rule out a specific range of ideas is a dangerous, destructive and self-sterilising business. But it is they, not we, who declare that: "Non-Marxists don't belong in a revolutionary party". We believe that a doctrinal definition of what is Marxist and what is not cannot regulate the range of differences contained within a party. This should be left to regulate itself spontaneously within a democratic-centralist organisational framework. We cannot demand - as the DCF do - that every shade of opinion in the organisation be considered just as good Marxists as anyone else; that would compromise the necessary struggle for political clarification. We simply establish a framework of majority discipline. At a certain point of difference, if it comes to that, organisational relations will break down and a separation will come about - because the minority finds the political subordination intolerable, because its ideas reflect or begin to make it vulnerable to other class or group pressure, etc. We cannot find a formula to prevent all splits and divisions; but a relatively broad range of coexistence is possible in a democratic-centralist framework such as we have, provided that:

1. The political positions are worked out and defined as clearly and honestly as possible.

2. There is honest working of the rules for coexistence. Conference decisions are binding, and minorities continue to argue for their ideas within the framework of being a loyal and constructive minority.

Because they rejected (1) - going for consensus and woolly ideological averaging-out - and also rejected (2), the old WSL leadership ended up expelling the Spartacists for their politics. The advocates of an all-inclusive party expelled colonists formally not for being colonists but for their politics.

The DCF pose a false alternative: either a catch-all party in which every faction are just as good Marxists as everyone else, or a narrow-minded sect. What we need is a party which guarantees broad democratic rights on the basis of a constant fight for scientific precision in politics and common discipline in action. As history shows, the cosy liberalism of the DCF's conception is not consistently democratic. It turns nasty at points of high political tension.

PART 3: NEITHER SECTARIANISM NOR PHILISTINISM, BUT MARXIST POLITICS

The nearest thing to a seriously-argued section in the platform is the one which argues that we are sectarians. It tries to pull a number of things together, to explain our alleged sectarianism and to point to its alleged roots in our attitude to the world Trotskyist movement.

Smith and his group have been saying things like this for a long time now, but the primary representative of the view in the DCF platform is Parsons. He wrote in his document for the February 1983 conference:

"I would sum up the approach of the document [of Cunliffe, now Parsons' ally and chief author of the DCF platform!] as nothing more than 'Spartacism with a human face... As far as I am concerned [Cunliffe's document] spits on the history of the struggle of all the sections of our world movement to build the FI. My own approach is somewhat different. I look at our movement not with rose-tinted spectacles but from a point of view which starts not from its weaknesses but from its strengths. I can be as sharp a critic as anyone if the need arises but in my general approach to analysing the world Trotskyist movement I believe that we have to look for the positive contributions, encourage them, publicise them, find ways of linking our work with them, seek to draw them together... Surely the question we should be asking ourselves is this, 'Is there not a case for us to join the USFI?' Certainly not on a raid, certainly not with the view that we have all the answers, but recognising that... we would have another golden opportunity to fuse our forces with the best of them - to share experiences, learn from each other, strengthen each other's practical work..." (IB 32).

To emphasise the "strengths", the "positive contributions", of groups like the USFI, the Morenists, or the Lambertists is fine - if those features are actually the dominant elements of the reality. But the point is that you can find out whether those are the dominant elements only by honestly analysing the reality as a whole. Parsons proceeds by assuming in advance that the 'good side' must be stressed. This is precisely 'rose-tinted spectacles' - giving a favourable hue to the reality which comes from your own preconceptions and not the reality itself.

The chief 'good side' of the USFI that Parsons cites in IB 32 is its ability "to group so many comrades in so many different countries in one movement". That is indeed a good side - all other things being equal. But all other things are not equal. The grouping-together is done on the basis of ideological blurring (the function of the international leadership being mainly to rationalise what the national sections do), and of repeated serious capitulation to Stalinism and petty bourgeois nationalism. Therefore the 'good side' is not a good side at all.

From Parsons to the DCF

The DCF takes Parsons' view as its implicit starting point, and proceeds to argue:

"Kinnell now dumps the whole membership of the old WSL on the same scrapheap as every other member of every other tendency of the world Trotskyist movement. In Kinnell's view there is not a single political current or comrade outside the old I-CL-Workers Fight tradition who is worth even the time of day. 'They are all useless', he told our conference in February 1983 (helping to secure the defeat of the document he was supporting).

"In this neat, sectarian world of solid blacks and clear whites, is it surprising that all those opposing Carolan and Kinnell can be so easily consigned to the outer darkness of non-Marxism? After all, if you are the only Marxists, then anyone who disagrees must be a non-Marxist..."

"It becomes the onerous task for a tiny handful of 'Marxists' (basically Carolan and Kinnell), accompanied by a loyal band of followers, single-handedly to rebuild the Trotskyist Fourth International against the opposition of quite large 'useless' groupings, some of which have the advantage of not being confined to a single country...."

On one level this is just ill-thought-out abuse. To say that the chief international currents of would-be Trotskyism are useless for revolutionary politics is a very different matter from saying that all the members of those currents are useless. Obviously they are not.

Nor have we ever said that all other currents are useless. We have said precisely which other currents we are politically indebted to - James P Cannon's SWP up to the early '60s, and to a lesser extent Lutte Ouvriere - and for what. That sort of acknowledgement is rather more useful than a general expression of self-identification with a big warm consensus of 'world Trotskyism'.

But the philistine derision of the idea of being in "opposition" to "quite large groupings" represents an important political strand in the DCF.

Revolutionary politics and the truth

What is wrong with the DCF's whole approach is that it downgrades Marxism, and displaces it away from the centre of our politics.

Marxism is about science, about defining the truth about reality so that we have the real knowledge needed to change it. Revolutionaries must seek knowledge and fearlessly face the implications. Trotsky put it well polemicising against the semi-revolutionary 1930s French socialist leader Marceau Pivert:

"Without plumbing the gist of programmatic differences, he repeats common-places on the 'impossibility' of any one tendency 'claiming to incorporate in itself all truth'. Ergo? Live and let live. Aphorisms of this type cannot teach an advanced worker anything worthwhile; instead of courage and a sense of responsibility they can only instill indifference and weakness... Revolutionary ardour in the struggle for socialism is inseparable from intellectual ardour in the struggle for truth". ('Trotsky on France', p.245).

You could paraphrase the attitude of the classics of our movement by paraphrasing Moses's First Commandment, with the truth speaking instead of Jehovah: I am the Lord thy God. Thou shalt not have false gods before me. It was Trotsky who brought the word ardour into it. You must assay and analyse reality, however bitter it may be.

Trotsky again, writing when the would-be revolutionary part of the world labour movement was under the combined dictatorship of the GPU gun and the big Stalinist lie: "To face reality squarely; not to seek the line of least resistance; to call things by their right names; to speak the truth to the masses, no matter how bitter it may be... these are the rules of the Fourth International". ('Transitional Programme').

Now of course such attitudes can lead to narrow dogmatic intolerance - to Savanarolas, Robespierres, and Enver Hoxhas. It can lead to the Spartacists, who, until recently anyway, were relatively honest sectarians who fearlessly followed through the logic of certain ideas in Cannon's version of Trotskyism.

But what is wrong with the attitude of the DCF platform - and it is very unashamedly expressed - is that it renounces in advance (and denounces us for not renouncing in advance) the task of defining the state of the world would-be Trotskyist movement. We dare not undertake that task - because if we are too honest it will isolate us...

The irreplaceable task of Marxism - keeping the world under review - is replaced at the centre of our concerns with diplomacy. Or, as Marx put it:

"If restraint shapes the character of inquiry it is a criterion for shying away from truth rather than from falsity. It is a drag on every step I take. With inquiry, restraint is the prescribed fear of finding the result, a means of keeping one from the truth... The essential form of mind is brightness and light, and you want to make shadow its only appropriate manifestation... The essence of mind is always truth itself, and what do you make its essence? Restraint...." ('Comments on the latest Prussian Censorship Instruction', Easton & Guddat p.70-71).

Again, in his preface to 'Capital':

"Every opinion based on scientific criticism is welcome. As to the prejudices of so-called public opinion, to which I have never made concessions, now as aforetime the maxim of the great Florentine [Dante] is mine: 'Follow your course, and let the people talk'."

But according to the DCF, the first question we are to ask is not, what is the truth about the ideas and performance of this or that organisation which calls itself Trotskyist. The first question is: what will be the consequences for our relations with X or Y if we think things through and arrive at conclusions?

That is both the spirit and the letter of what the DCF say. They do not think - or try to think - honestly about the experiences and the problems of the Trotskyist movement. Philistine fears of isolation frighten and paralyse them from thinking before they start.

They know what our criticisms are of the USFI and the other currents, and why those criticisms lead us to define the USFI as centrist and the Lambertists and Morenists as worse. Cunliffe actually wrote out the gist of those criticisms in his document last year (IB 22). The DCF do not now attempt to refute those specific criticisms, or even to argue specifically that the criticisms have been given exaggerated weight. No: they content themselves with the general thought that there must be some good there somewhere.

Trotsky said it well and to the point about this sort of thing when he said that without ardour for the truth you could not have a revolutionary movement. He was merely echoing Lenin's idea that without revolutionary theory there can be no revolutionary movement. Smith will understand what both Trotsky and Lenin were talking about when he learns to understand his own experience, and specifically the whys and wherefores of the sorry break-up into small fragments of the old WSL.

Inverted sectarianism

To the silly screeching of Cunliffe, Parsons, Levy and Smith that our attitude implies that we think there are only two Marxists in the world, there is not much to say. (I am inclined to ask them: where did they get the idea that there are two Marxists? Don't you believe it! That's just propaganda by Kinnell...)

The DCF's thinking here is a form of inverted sectarianism, psychologically anyway. They cannot conceive of people taking their ideas seriously without narrow sectarianism. When they took their own ideas seriously, back in the days before they got demoralised and fell into broad-church politics, they were narrowly and arrogantly sectarian. (One example, for readers who are not familiar with the history. In 1978, because of a split in the organising committee, there were two Bloody Sunday commemoration marches, one by the Provisionals and one by most of the British left groups and campaigns. The old WSL announced that it was going on the Provisionals' march - because of its contempt and disdain for these so-called 'left' groups...) Now Cunliffe, Levy etc. have softened up and lost confidence in themselves and in the neo-Healyite politics which suited the old WSL in the days when it had a bit of vigour about it. They reacted from taking their own ideas seriously in a sectarian way into the sort of demoralised ecumenism most clearly expressed by Parsons - there is a world Trotskyist movement with lots of rich and varied traditions, nearly all differences are misunderstandings, and one day it will all combine into one powerful movement, if only all the sectarians will stop worrying about politics.

This is not politically serious. It is a phenomenon of personal and organisational dissolution on the part of the old WSL hard core.

No movement can be built or sustained with such attitudes. Nothing solid

can be built by people who mock and sneer at the idea of setting ourselves up in opposition to "quite large groupings" like the USFI, as the DCF platform does.

We have to try to be honest Marxists who think things through fearlessly, who train ourselves to think in terms of the brutal truth of the real world of class slavery in which we live, so that we can create a clear revolutionary organisation capable of coming to grips with reality and changing it.

The 'world Trotskyist movement'

The central truth about the 'world Trotskyist movement' for us is that it is in a state of advanced political corruption and decay. The measure of its terrible state is to be found in the fact that the best of the big international currents is the Mandelites - people with a truly dismal record over the last 30 years.

Trotskyism is divided up into a whole range of political mutations in which bits and pieces of historic dogmas and aspirations are amalgamated with other and alien currents, from different sorts of Stalinism, through Catholic nationalism in Ireland, to Islamic reaction in Iran. We cannot change that by pretending it is not so. We must not fear to define things as they are because people won't like us for it.

The only way to drain the swamp of post-war 'Trotskyism' is to face up to what it is and has been, and work to renovate the revolutionary communist tradition. It may be that we ourselves lack the capacity to achieve much; but if all we manage to do is to define the state of things within the "world Trotskyist movement" accurately, then so be it. We must make what contribution we can. We must function as honest Marxists and do what we can.

Honesty and rigorous thinking does not imply sectarian isolation or aloofness. The history of the WF/I-CL tendency shows that. On the EEC, for example, we have been more or less alone in mounting an internationalist refusal to go along with the little-Englandism. It has not stopped us working with prominent anti-Marketters on issues like Labour Party democracy. (And now the tide has begun to turn our way on the EEC issue itself).

Ex-I-CL DCFers and the DCF's philistinism

Given the old WSL leaders' record,

it is understandable why Smith, Cunliffe, Levy etc should adopt their attitude of philistine derision of our attempts to think things through like Marxists and to "say what is". It is not so clear why people like Gunther, Oliver and Armstrong put their names to such rubbish.

After all, they have spent many years insisting that the various 'Trotskyist' groups were chauvinist on the EEC. After all, it is only four years since the I-CL was virtually alone among the 'orthodox Trotskyist' groups of the whole world in condemning the Russian invasion of Afghanistan and calling for withdrawal of Russian troops. (Today they have all swung round on this question, and the Smith group is so isolated that they seem like cranks: even Cunliffe, who jeered at the I-CL in the pages of Socialist Press, has changed his mind).

And I could cite many other examples. Armstrong, I seem to remember, was once brave enough to write and publish a 'sectarian' series of articles putting our position on the EEC, back in the mid '70s when the chauvinist gale was really blowing windy and wet. He wrote a pamphlet on Militant which was very far from the spirit of warm fellow-feeling among Trotskyists.

What's the matter, comrades? Are you suffering from middle-aged softening of the backbone and brain so much that you put your names to this philistine jeering by the inverted sectarians Cunliffe, Parsons, and Smith?

For our part we will continue to try to be Marxists, to criticise the so-called Trotskyists and in general to say what is. We will seek dialogue with those with whom we have differences and collaboration with them where that is possible. We reject the defeatist attitude that we should relate to the bigger 'Trotskyist' currents as if they were serious mass working class parties (like the Comintern) and not what they in fact are - weak propaganda groups whose politics are heavily adulterated with alien petty bourgeois and Stalinist content.

Negative cultism

One final word about the attitude of the old-WSL core of the DCF leadership here.

There is something ridiculous in the combination of their philistine jeering - the argument that those who dare to criticise the 'world Trotskyist movement' rigorously must think that they themselves are 'the only Marxists in the world' - and the support for the pretensions of Smith as a political arbiter that they write into their resolution for conference (in relation to Afghanistan). (See part 9)

In a certain sense the attitude of Levy and Cunliffe is a sort of negative cultism. All their political lives they have practised deference to 'great men' - Healy or Thornett - living in their shadows as organisational or literary servants. The 'great men' demanded deference, had ascribed status, made claims to pre-eminence by virtue of who they were, and so on.

Cunliffe and Levy view what we say through the prism of their own experience, and slot us and our concerns into the deferential politics pattern that has dominated their political lives. To dare to criticise comrade Smith rigorously is to challenge comrade Smith and to want to replace him as the centre of the system of deference. (That's how Smith sees it, too. That's how Smith saw every political discussion in the organisation, and that's why real political discussion with Smith was impossible. Under every 'political' discussion was the issue of how it affected the status of Smith in the organisation, and therefore issues could never be discussed on their merits. To challenge Smith politically was to make an imblurable attack on his prestige and position. He would react to losing a vote or an argument, not by coming back with better or more vigorous arguments, or by re-considering, but either by quiet resentment or by complaints about some alleged "outrage" or another in the treatment of him personally.)

PART 5A: 'UNITY-MONGERING'

'Unity-mongering', writes Oliver in IB 111 part 2, was "a main plank of the old I-CL". It is certainly a main plank of the politics of the DCF, but Oliver seriously misrepresents the politics of the I-CL.

He quotes Kinnell & me from 1978:

"Among militants who honestly set out to fight for the rudimentary ideas of revolutionary communism, mistakes and differences should be containable within a common disciplined organisation. This applies to nearly all the Trotskyist or near-Trotskyist left in Britain... The existing divisions do not correspond to programmatic ruptures or even to necessary irreconcilability in practical work...."

Further he quotes us:

[The divisions are] "a product of the early bureaucratisation of the British mainstream, then of the social democratisation of the Militant and the Week, followed by the bureaucratisation of the IS/SWP".

So Oliver concludes:

"The position of the old I-CL was that between all the British 'Trotskyist' Left Groups, there were no political differences that could not be contained within one organisation.... What explanation can there be for the existence of so many different left Groups if there are no political differences justifying their separation? ... It is the awful internal regimes..."

Oliver's version of the I-CL's ideas is very simple. There are no political differences among the would-be revolutionary groups that are really worth worrying about. In their basic politics all the groups are OK. The snag is that they all have bureaucratic leaderships. The answer, then, is to set up a sufficiently loose and all-inclusive regime. Once that is done, all the groups can be united - and since, as we have seen, none of the political differences are really serious, we will all live happily ever after.

The conclusion for today is very simple too. Loosen up the WSL's regime sufficiently and we can reunite happily with the Smith group (and perhaps also with the IMG and the Chartists, as Oliver proposed in April 1983).*

'Unity' in 1977-8

Now, as we shall see (in part 7), the DCF's proposals to make the WSL's regime looser would not even permit a reunification with the Smith group - or not for more than a few hectic, destructive months of factional gang-warfare followed by an inevitable second split.

But aside from that it must strike any reader, even one completely unfamiliar with the 1978 document that Oliver is quoting, that there is something strange here.

1977-8 was the height of the IMG's unity ballyhoo. Yet, instead of going along with that, as you would expect from Oliver's account of our ideas, the I-CL rejected unity with the IMG. It did not make any approaches for unity to any other far-left groups, either.

In fact, Oliver's quotations from the document are highly selective.

When we wrote that document, we were concerned that our justified resistance to the IMG unity ballyhoo, plus the after-effects of the Workers Power split, plus the generally low level of the class struggle at the time, were pushing the I-CL towards sectarianism - towards erecting a temporarily necessary political isolation into a virtue. We set out to 'bend the stick' the other way.

* In his document with McKelvie and Parsons, issued at the April 1983 conference.

At the time of writing the document we had no specific practical proposals to turn the I-CL away from sectarianism. That came a few months later, with the S**V. But we tried at least to lay the general ideological groundwork.

As the document noted: "We are not in a position to propose immediate actions for revolutionary unity". But for precisely that reason: "For the I-CL now it is necessary to reaffirm our previous perspective on revolutionary regroupment, to decide consciously against drifting into a spirit of sectarian exclusiveness, and to fight to overcome our isolation on the revolutionary left, instead of accepting it and adapting to it".

The document described the revolutionary left in that period as being polarised between "philistine-opportunist" and "philistine-sectarian" trends.

"The SWP... is still dominated by philistinism, crude workerism, and cutting of corners on political principle... The IMG no longer want to discuss politics, they just want to know whether you are for unity (as defined by them)... The WSL... has established itself as the philistine-sectarian beneficiary from the rebound from the philistine-opportunist SWP and IMG - the group for those who want a 'hard' organisation and do not care too much what politics it is 'hard' about."

In such conditions: "We must resist the resulting dual pressure: towards flabby, accommodating 'let's please everyone' attitudes, and (a greater danger for us) towards soured, inward-looking sectarianism."

Oliver quotes sentences directed against the sectarian pressure, out of context and without the qualifications about the need also to oppose political flabbiness. To adapt our 1978 comment on the WSL, he ends up trying to establish the DCF as the faction for those who want a soft organisation and do not care too much what politics it is soft about.

What we said in 1978

The following extended excerpt from the 1978 document gives a better idea of its full argument. (A longer excerpt is also available in 'International Communist' magazine, no.7).

"Although the divisions are often aggravated by pointless and irresponsible factionalism, there are real political reasons for the major splits in the Trotskyist movement. The world since the Second World War has posed a series of new political problems - the deformed workers' states in Yugoslavia, China, Cuba, etc; 20 years of relative stability in the advanced capitalist countries; complicated national struggles in Ireland and the Middle East.

"The Trotskyists had to readjust and re-define their revolutionary perspectives. With limited forces, and few experienced leaders, they failed to do it adequately or unanimously. In the early 1950s the Trotskyist movement split on a world scale.

"The split was not a clear one. But the dividing lines it introduced have been more important and more lasting than any of the other, minor, rifts in the Trotskyist movement.

"On the one hand there are the sectarians, for whom all political life centres round the factional self-promotion of their organisation, the denunciation of 'revisionism', and the proclamation of the 'correct' combination of slogans from the Transitional Programme - which History will reward by producing mass struggles from the womb of its ever-present catastrophic 'crisis'. On the other, those who make a more serious attempt to analyse the real movement of the class struggle - but then end up posing themselves as Marxist advisers to the most promising leftward-moving current.

The sectarian tendency is represented in Britain in a grotesquely degenerate form by the 'Workers Revolutionary Party' - and in a milder form by the Workers Socialist League. The mainstream has been represented since the 1960s

by the International Marxist Group.

"There exist also militants who are trying to construct a Trotskyist tendency free from both dead-end sectarianism and supine opportunism. That is our role; in that sphere lie our achievements since 1967..

"What has happened to the Trotskyist movement since the late 1940s is that it has been reduced to a spectrum of sects - within which some groups struggle, with greater or lesser success, to rise above the status of sects...

"The sight of this range of sects can easily lead to either (or both) of two wrong conclusions: contempt for the whole Trotskyist tradition (but, with all its faults, it is the only revolutionary tradition we have), or a wish for unity at all costs. But if creating new sects is not the answer, no more is a patchwork (and in any case impossible) unity of the old sects...

"Among militants who honestly set out to fight for the rudimentary ideas of revolutionary communism, mistakes and differences should be containable within a common disciplined organisation. This applies to nearly all the 'Trotskyist' or near-'Trotskyist' left in Britain.

"Honest errors - if they are serious - tend to shade over into fakery or sectarian sclerosis. This has happened with the 'Militant' or the Lambertists in one direction, the RCG or the Spartacists in another. The major groups of the revolutionary left - IMG, SWP, WSL in Britain, and nearly all the 'Trotskyist' currents internationally - have fallen into fakery on particular issues: yet their political positions as such would not prevent revolutionary unity with them.

"The IMG and SWP have become centrist, the WSL sectarian, because of the interaction between the social and organisational reality of those organisations (petty bourgeois orientation, crude workerism, bureaucratism, etc) and their political and ideological errors.

"Yet those characteristics should not be seen as fixed forever. For us at present:

"Unity with the SWP is ruled out by their bureaucratism, indeed their almost-complete lack of conscientious political accounting (arising from their conception of the party);

"Unity with the IMG is ruled out by their opportunist orientation ('Broad left'-ism, electoralism, etc) coupled with lack of willingness to confront serious political/ideological issues (e.g. in debate with us), coupled with lack of serious proletarian orientation.

"Unity with the WSL is ruled out by their sectarianism (organisational and political).

"As long as this remains the case we have to pursue political competition with these tendencies, while seeking comradely dialogue where possible. But a change of mind on their part, or (more likely) a change of events which re-focuses the attention of revolutionaries, could open new possibilities for us. Even if this remains only a 'theoretical' possibility, we must keep it open, if only for the sake of relating to critical tendencies within, or coming from the SWP, IMG and WSL..."

Our task therefore was to fight for sharp, clear Marxist politics; to seek unity where possible; to build our own tendency in opposition to others when unity was not possible; neither to extrapolate present divisions 'logically' into the indefinite future, nor to dissolve today's sharp tasks into dreams of the possible unity of the future.

Criteria for unity

We concluded: "As regards any particular proposal for unification, the question is: is it possible? is there the political basis for it to be more than a temporary alliance bound to fly apart - with harmful results - at the first

test; what price has to be paid in temporary inward-turning of energy and possible temporary unclarity; can we do it on a principled political basis and without gagging ourselves ideologically?"

These criteria will do very well to assess the DCF's programme of reunification with the Smith group.

Is it possible? In part 7 I argue that it is not.

Is there the political basis? On a very general level there should be - namely, the present politics of the WSL. The differences of the Smith group on Afghanistan or Ireland or the Labour Party should be containable. But the problem is that the Smith group does not find the present politics of the WSL a political basis for unity. Fundamentally because of their concern for the centrality of the 'worker leadership', they were not able to accept the position of a minority.

What price would have to be paid in temporary inward-turning of energy? A huge price.

Would it fly apart - with harmful results - at the first test? Yes.

Perhaps an extra paragraph should have been added to the 1978 document - on how the apparent polar opposite of sectarianism and vague unity-mongering can interact, help each other, and turn into each other.

The sterile formulas of sectarian politics fail to grip reality. When the pressure of reality therefore breaks the sectarian's faith in those formulas, s/he is liable to fall into the most demoralised scepticism. That is what has happened with the Smith group. Conversely, the method of those who blur over and smear over political questions with a general spirit of unity and seeking the middle ground can often leave the field open to the worst sectarians. That is what has happened with the Parsons/Oliver strand in the DCF. That is how the Parsons/Oliver group, which in 1982 seemed to want to help us lessen the polarisation and then dared to criticise the Smith group, has now become a loose garment being worn by the Smith group.

Unity in 1968

The best that can be said for Oliver's account of WF/I-CL politics on unity is that he is trying to jump back to what he remembers of what our politics were on unity 13 or even 16 years ago, in the heady period after 1968. We did then sometimes put forward general proposals for revolutionary left unity on a relatively loose basis - partly derived from the efforts to unify the revolutionary left in France at the time.

But that was a different period, when conditions and prospects could reasonably be assessed as very different from what they in fact turned out to be. The left did not unite - not even in France.

We ourselves did not hang around forlornly preaching unity - we got on with building an organisation. We seized or created opportunities for unity - and when we found it politically necessary we split. Since 1967 (or 1971, when we separated from IS) we have amassed a lot of experience of building an independent organisation, and an experience unique on the left of working for unity. Before Oliver can reasonably hark back to 13 or 16 years ago, he should critically assess our experience and draw conclusions from it. He should independently assess the fusion with the Smith group and account for its failures. He does neither.

Naively he now talks of general unity in the accents of 1968 or the following years as if he has been asleep for a decade and a half. The only account he gives of our recent experience is an uncritical endorsement of the factional version of the whys and wherefores of the split put out by those who, because they refused to work by the rules irreplaceable for constructive coexistence, are politically responsible for the split.

If I get time, I'll produce a longer-term assessment of what our tendency has said on left unity since the '60s. For now the discussion of 1978 is sufficient. The organisation has not been asleep on the question for 15 years, even if Oliver has.

PART 6: THE GENERAL PERSPECTIVES OF THE DCF

I think I've shown above that the immediate perspective of the DCF - or at least of its chief leaders - is to split from the WSL and join the Smith group during or after the WSL conference. Two, three, four or more people may hive off from the DCF and remain with us; others will simply drop out. But the core of the DCF as an entity is a splinter of the Smith group still within the WSL, and it will go out of the WSL as soon as the transactions between the Smith group and the WSL are concluded.

But what about the longer-term perspectives of the DCF leaders? When the DCF leaders try to rally WSL members to go with them to the Smith group, what perspectives are they calling them to? What are the prospects of the Smith group, including the DCF?

The demoralisation of the Smith group

One of the most remarkable things about the polemics of Smith and Jones in the last few months is how openly and candidly - even though not explicitly and avowedly - they have expressed their own pessimism and demoralisation. This has usually taken the form of self-revealing comments about the WSL and its prospects. For example:

"Carolyn will be left with at best 80 or 90 people. Of those less than half are I-CL loyalists... To think that this is a healthy basis for a new group is wishful thinking at best - particularly with the odour of this exercise hanging around..." (IB X102).

Now Smith is wrong here even factually. As always with Smith, the wish is father to the thought. The membership of the WSL at present is about 140. With the bulk of the DCF gone, it will be between 120 and 130. That is still somewhat bigger than the membership of the I-CL in July 1981 (about 104)*. There is no doubt that the fusion has been a costly failure, but we are by no means so badly off as Smith makes out. Also, with two or three exceptions, we have all the youth, and for anybody who knows anything about the history of revolutionary groups that is a very significant fact. When we pull the organisation into shape we have serious possibilities of recruiting a lot more youth.

But leave all that aside. If for Smith "80 or 90" people in the WSL spells ruin and collapse for us, then what does it mean for his group to have half that (and quite a few of them have long been semi-active members, a large part of the Oxford group for example)? It is plain that Smith must feel very pessimistic about the prospects facing his new group.

They have almost no youth, and no women's group worth speaking of. They are also very thinly spread geographically outside Oxford. Even if they 'regroup' with a few of the sectarians who went out with Morrow or later, that will remain true. Smith and his group will not now get the big boost that USFI and other publicity gave them in 1975 - the silence in the left press (so far) is a sign of the times for Smith, though I expect Socialist Action will give Smith a plug if a courtship develops.

Politically the Smith group is and will be very far from homogeneous.

Parsons, I reckon, is probably right to believe that Smith is instinctively sympathetic to his (Parsons') sort of politics on the Labour Party. The Smith group anyway already contains an element which is more right wing than Parsons is - the local government people. The old WSL already had a practice which

* The figure given by Smith and the DCF, of 300 members in the WSL at the time of fusion, is wishful thinking. The best estimate we can make is that in July 1981 the I-CL had 104 members. The old WSL had about 128, but of those about 28 were never in any real sense functioning members of the new WSL.

accommodated that sort of politics - exemplified by the story of John P. He was a WSL local government dignitary for some time before the fusion. In practice he was politically invisible. Though privately he was a sectarian who thought our paper "not Trotskyist" for lack of SLI-type formulas and declarations, in practice he functioned as a council routinist. Back in 1980 Cunliffe and the worker leadership in Socialist Press were fulminating against us as "errand boys for Benn" and so on. Then B. was set up as a breakaway from us on the question of rate rises, and by any standards it was a right-wing breakaway. JP wrote for it when it was struggling to establish itself. I asked him why, given what SP was saying, and he replied: Because I was asked to...

Nevertheless there must surely be a limit to the political coexistence of sectarians and opportunists. Though Smith's instincts line him up with Parsons, his ideas remain recognisably Healyite. Jones is a mid-'60s Healyite on the Labour Party, only slightly modified by acceptance that the O. is a useful place to be. The debate last year showed that a big part of the Smith group in Oxford is sectarian.

And the leadership of the Smith group is extremely demoralised. The readily visible evidence for this is quotations like the one from IB X102 above, their recent recorded statements on the state of the labour movement (see IB 90), and their recent record of activity. Even the miners' strike has not shaken them alive, so far as one can see. Since their suspension and expulsion they have lain doggo - neither continuing to sell our weekly paper, as they would if they were serious about wanting to come back into the organisation, nor producing any publication of their own. They are giving 'external' support to the DCF, and doing little else as a group. They do local work, of course; Smith is president of Oxford TC, and involved in its solidarity work. But as a political tendency they do nothing - in the most important class battle for years.

This is in keeping with the attitude to the class struggle that they expressed when, with the special conference demand, they tried to turn the organisation inwards to discuss their largely imaginary grievance-mongering instead of turning outwards to the miners' strike. And that, in turn, was a continuation of their attitude during the NGA struggle last December (see IB 90).

To sum up: the Smith group have no coherent set of ideas to justify their existence as a small group, and they do not even believe that they have one. They no longer have the tremendous prestige and publicity attached to Smith personally which in 1975 could substitute for coherent ideas as something to rally people round. They have no clear banner to organise themselves round - and they are well aware of that.

This situation was summed up vividly by a response from Smith in the North West regional meeting on May 27. Kinnell asked Smith how he saw the reasons for the falling-apart of the old WSL. It was inevitable, said Smith. The old WSL was a heterogeneous organisation, so it was bound to break up under pressure. But he did not regret that. The old WSL had been a real movement, not a narrow faction....

But the whole purpose of a revolutionary party, as distinct from all the other, broader organisations of the labour movement, is that it is homogeneous and cohesive enough to hold together under pressure - and rather worse pressure than the old WSL suffered over the last couple of years, at that. Smith's response implicitly expressed a giving-up on the whole project of building a revolutionary party.

The options for the Smith group/DCF

The options now for the Smith group are:

1. Restart the old WSL - but they themselves believe that this is pretty hopeless.

The experience of the Morrow group will be an additional depressing factor for them.

Morrow's group had fundamentally the same politics as Smith and Jones (as Jones frequently pointed out). It had the advantage of believing in those politics more strongly and being generally more vigorous, with a much higher proportion of young members. Yet since it split from us it has collapsed dismally. It has split into two, and the rump WIL has signalled its demoralisation by applying to join the Socialist Federation, an explicitly anti-Leninist breakaway from the SWP.*

2. Go into the former IMG (now nameless). We hear plausible rumours that they have discussed this but have not decided yet (though Jones at the London area meeting denied even discussing it).

The political ground has been prepared for such a move. At the November 1983 NC Cunliffe moved that the WSL go for fusion with the USFI. Smith abstained, saying that such a big decision needed more discussion but that there was "no option now but to find some way into USFI, seek to get a hearing in USFI. Part of Carolan's and Kinnell's attitude is to get our own membership poisoned against the USFI. There is no miraculous change in the USFI, nevertheless the Mandel-SWP conflict will open up opportunities. We're stuck as we are. Because of our political positions, nobody in the world will touch us with a barge-pole".

The DCF platform prepares the ground further when it mocks the very idea of building an organisation "against the opposition of quite large 'useless' groupings" like the USFI.

Which faction of the IMG?

The logic of the Smith group's Third-Worldism - their most developed difference with us - should take them to the Castroites, but residual Healyism on Cuba will probably stop them.

The Mandelites? The right wing 'liquidationist' group around Ross and Pennington? Remember last year's hullabaloo that we were liquidationists? But if the Smith group go for the IMG, that is where they will have to go.

Stranger things have happened than the transformation that would take the former sectarian wing of the new WSL into the Mandelite group, which now undoubtedly practises much of the opportunism that Smith/Jones unjustly - and perhaps insincerely - accused us of in 1982-3.

If the Smith group do go to the Mandelites, then it will be a form of giving up politically and of liquidating their political responsibilities into the USFI current. Psychologically - not least because of their philistine deference to the 'world Trotskyist movement' - this must be very attractive to them. But they would have to accept being an exclusively internal grouping talking only to the other members of the IMG about whatever differences they had. If they were treated like the Castroite minority is treated - not especially bureaucratically, but not as privileged beings, either - then they would soon begin to think nostalgically about their days in the WSL when Smith's speeches

* The Socialist Federation newsletter reports: "The major development has come from Big Flame... who are interested in working with us and possibly joining the Federation... Their politics are sufficiently similar to ours for us to work together easily on many issues. A number of us have some reservations, but believe these can be resolved through discussion. More problematic is an approach from the Workers International League, a small split from the WSL. They are orthodox Trotskyists, and would want to join the federation as a formal faction fighting for their own programme. Although they are only small (15 or so), their tradition is quite different from other members of the Federation, and we need to discuss if, and how far, we can work together..."

were printed in full and he had the luxury of also making factional agitation against the majority over the secondary details of his presentation in the paper.

3. Link up with the Morenists or the Lonaites? That is possible, but it is a variant of (1).

4. Become a segment of B - a group with a feeble but face-saving 'party profile' which functions in practice almost entirely through B.

These are the options and the prospects, and none of them are very satisfactory, are they?

The IMG option

Every one of the above options means more or less abandoning the aspirations which we set for ourselves in July 1981.

If it's option no.1 (re-starting the old WSL), it will mark a massive step back for the Smith group from where they were in 1981 after $6\frac{1}{2}$ years of independent party-building - indeed, a massive step back from where they were in 1975. Almost every dire consequence they (falsely) predict for the majority would exist for them, magnified enormously.

If they go into the IMG, on whichever side, it will be the self-liquidation of the Smith current (though, no doubt, it will be dressed up). They will have exchanged the position of a privileged minority in the WSL for that of a small internal grouping in the IMG. They will be as little able to argue their muddled ideas there as they have been in the WSL.

Yet two things make the IMG option the most likely one. Having refused to coexist with us in the WSL they have no better option. And, decisively in my view, going into the IMG would bring Smith the sort of personal boost and spotlight warmth he needs badly. For, of course, the IMG would use him as a dignitary, and probably not only in Britain.

If that sounds a nasty and harsh verdict, then let me improve upon it. In nearly three years of close observation of and interaction with Smith, I have never seen him rise above the level of prestige-seeking subjectivism and personality politics. On every issue, at every turn in the political road that led us to the expulsions, Smith has never shown himself to have any motive forces for action/^{other} than those refracted through his interest as a political personality.

James P Cannon, who was very wise and very experienced in such matters, once said this about William Z Foster, the CP USA's leading trade union figure for many years.

"Foster was a slave to ambition, to his career. That was his infirmity. But this judgment... must be qualified by the recognition that he sought to serve his ambition and to advance his career in the labour movement and not elsewhere... Within that limit... Foster subordinated everything to... his almost pathological love of fame". ('The First Ten Years of American Communism').

The same words would fit Smith to a considerable extent.

In a series of "if", "therefore", and "then" calculations like the above, you cannot, of course, be sure. A major qualification is that Smith is perhaps too demoralised to make the necessary effort to get into the IMG (combatting any internal opposition in his own group, facing up to the polemics that such a move will bring on his head, dealing with any frictions...) But right now, as far as I can see, the most likely destination of the Smith group and the DCF core is the Ross section of the ex-IMG.

Cunliffe, the 'anti-Pabloite' who thinks that the Healyite-Lambertist 'ICFI' of 1963 was the 'Fourth International', will tell himself that he is going into the USFI tactically, to do a political job there, as he proposed

at our November 1983 NC. Parsons can tell himself that he is realising the mystical unification of Trotskyist souls, "to share experiences, learn from each other, strengthen each other's practical work", as he put it in IB 32.

All this means that the DCF leaders are engaged in a swindle when they try to get people to go along with them to the Smith group because the WSL conference is likely to reject their organisational proposals. For a certainty the IMG will also reject them.

The new faction is politically a pot-pourri.

Quite a few of the faction members tell you that they do not agree with 'everything' in the Document of the Eight.

Levy does not, I understand, entirely agree with the idea of having conferences every three or four months. (There is not meaningful differences in terms of what it means and implies for the organisation between conferences and 'national aggregates').

The DCF end their platform with the call to WSL members to join the faction to "work with us to develop further a balance-sheet of the fusion and a programme to resolve the crisis of the WSL". This is the well-known method of the Oxford faction - first organise your grouping, call for a special conference, etc - then work out the politics.

The DCF politics are all rather ill-defined for a grouping that sets itself up as the saviour of the WSL. The only thing that is fully and clearly defined is the envenomed, hysterical portrayal of the majority of the WSL. Our alleged responsibility for the break with Oxford is central to the platform. Accept that, the DCF says, and join us... Then we will see.

The DCF does present itself as the bearer of a set of ideas about how to organise a revolutionary party (modelled on the old WSL) and as the advocate of readmitting the Oxford group to the WSL. Here too their programme and proposals are far too underdeveloped to have any political bearing on the goals they set themselves.

Considering that they have no independent analysis of the reasons for the split, and endorse completely the viewpoint of the Oxford faction, it would be a miracle if they were able to make proposals that had any grip on the situation. In fact even if you accept the Smith/DCF demonological analysis of the problems of the WSL, the DCF platform is still no solution.

Let's think it through.

What happens after the Oxford faction is readmitted? If the DCF were serious people, they would have included in their call for reunification an objective assessment of the problems the organisation has experienced. They would have tried to itemise the problems and make proposals for overcoming them after the reunification they propose. Do they want to go back to what we had before the split? Or what?

Instead they resort to demonology. They endorse and rehash the 'analysis' of the Oxford faction. Their posture as unifiers and as a middle faction is void of independent political content.

Now if the problems that led us to clear the debris of the Smith group out of the WSL all arise because we are villains and/or hand-raisers, then the DCF should have a clear programme: remove the existing leadership and the "apolytes", take a majority of the NC. The reason why the DCF do not propose that is that it would immediately raise the question: how, and on what politics, would the DCF lead the organisation?

In fact the reason why the fusion broke down was:

- a) The refusal of the Oxford group to accept that they were a minority.
- b) Their months-long campaign of organisational disruption and SLL-style scandal-mongering against the 'bureaucracy'.
- c) Their treating the paper as lesser mortals treat the IB.
- d) Their refusal to work for the organisation, culminating in an internal secession after Cunliffe's walk-out from the paper.
- e) The refusal of the EC members to take any responsibility for running the organisation, or to back the elected leadership in imposing minimal discipline on their followers.

f) Their use of our attempts to administer the organisation and discipline its members as fuel for irresponsible agitation.

g) Their refusal to let the leading committees function normally - or at all, sometimes - by incessantly and implacably agitating and scandalising.

h) Their bitter resentment - expressed in the preposterous outcry that, though they were given more or less free access to our public press, they were being 'suppressed' - that members of the minority could reply to them in our press and that some of Smith's material was labelled in the paper as a minority opinion.

i) Their refusal to put Oxford actually under the control of the leading committees.

j) Their maintenance of a separate organisation which, in its last period within the WSL, developed the attitude of a Spartacist-like entry group prepared to subordinate the organisation completely to the needs of its factional agitation. That is the message we finally got from their proposal to have a special conference in the middle of the miners' strike to discuss the grievances that they had been going on about for many months.

Our fundamental difference with them, the difference that led us to throw them out, did not concern political positions but their attitude to the organisation and their effect on it. It was in our capacity as responsible people building the organisation that we found them intolerable. So long as Levy and the others go on hysterically about 'political expulsions' they will not understand what has happened and why.

These problems, and the conclusion to which we were finally forced that there was no hope of things getting better, led us first to give the faction the ultimatum contained in the March 10 NC resolution and then, when they treated that resolution as just more material for agitation against the 'bureaucratic' regime, thrown them out. It was almost two years since Smith and Jones had deliberately recreated the old WSL/I-CL division by declaring a tendency in May 1982 (as Parsons and Oliver noted at the time: "It is difficult to escape the conclusion that the tendency comrades wish to polarise the situation in the movement").

If you ignore all this, as the DCF does, then you can pretend that everything will be all right if we have reunification and the proposals in the Document of the Eight are imposed. In fact those proposals would answer none of the problems, and could only recreate in an exacerbated form all the problems that existed before March 31.

The DCF proposals and the problems

Think it through. So we have aggregates every three or four months. This will inevitably make for more organisational chaos. It will turn us sharply towards internal politics. It will create a situation of permanent and intense factional warfare, spreading the situation that existed on the leading committees before March 31 throughout the WSL. No sooner will one aggregate be over than the next will loom on the horizon. No issue will ever be definitely settled. The organisation will become habitable only to the likes of McInnis and Parsons. The already weak NC will be weakened further: any decision it makes will be subject to challenge at a national aggregate within a few weeks.

So we have the constitutional right of minorities to write what they like in the public press.

Think through what this would amount to as a solution to the problems we have actually had. The story that the Smith faction was suppressed is ludicrous, as I proved in IB 114. I also proved there that what their factually nonsensical claims that they were suppressed came down to in practice was resentment at being presented as the minority in the paper and resentment at being replied

to (as Smith was, for example, on the Cowley witch-hunt).

So now the DCF has its way and we give minorities the constitutional right of access to the paper. We destroy the possibility of a coherent WSL line in the process. But what do we gain?

Assume that after the June conference which takes the DCF's advice and re-admits the Oxford faction the majority and minority are roughly the same as before March 31 when we suspended them. Smith and his group will actually have nothing they did not have before in terms of access to the paper. The DCF don't propose that our conference instructs the editor/editors of the paper to publish anything Smith writes, at whatever length he chooses, or to let the minority dictate the editorial line of the paper. (What they propose about Afghanistan is scarcely less bizarre than that: but for the sake of the argument I continue to assume that they are not proposing to let the minority set the editorial line of the paper).

So we would still have Smith's bitter resentment at having his material appear in the paper tagged as a minority position. If Smith submits a 6000-word piece and we tell him he must cut it to 3000, we have the same problem.

And worse than that. Those who differ from Smith will have the same rights in the paper as he does. We can reply to him and where necessary do to him what I did in the Cowley witch-hunt dispute - make him look a fool, to force him into silence. Back to where we were last December...

The formal programme in the declaration of the Eight is for minority rights: but the rights the Smith minority wanted, demanded, and needed in practice included the right not to be challenged or replied to.

Needed? Yes, needed. The central problem in the leading committees of the WSL throughout the fusion could be summed up like this: if Smith and Jones did not have an ascribed status, then they would not have a very high status in the organisation's leadership. That was the living root of their undemocratic demands for deference.

This basic fact expresses itself in every area, and one of its implications for the future is that a group led by Smith and Jones could only allow the minority rights they advocate to deferential minorities. In a re-fused organisation, whether we were in the majority or the minority, we would not be deferential on important questions; and whether we were in the majority or the minority, we would not let Smith and Jones have the right to put gibberish in the paper uncontradicted.

The only way the "Eight's" proposal could conciliate Smith and his group would be if we were not in the organisation. That is the logic of what they say.

Whoever was in the majority in a re-united organisation, the proposals in the Document of the Eight offer no solution to the antagonisms that led to the split. They could not conciliate Smith or reconcile him to being contradicted and forced to defend himself by reason and argument in the paper.

If we were in the majority, the Smith group would still be replied to and kept in their political place by open and public political arguments. If they were the majority, it would probably be a matter of weeks before they refused us the rights they now advocate. They would have no choice unless they voluntarily submitted to the only sort of 'suppression' we ever imposed on them - public contradiction and arguments they can't answer. It is no accident that minorities in the old WSL had fewer rights than minorities in the I-CL or the new WSL: Smith and Jones could not play the central political role in an organisation except where a special status was accorded to them and because of that those who knew more than them, or thought they knew better, deferred to the "proletarian leadership".

So unless the DCF can hope to expel the present leadership (and all the "handraisers"? A "mass expulsion", maybe?), their proposals are in fact either

irrelevant to the problems that led to the expulsion of the DCF, or would make things worse.

A new split would be only a short time coming, and if the Smith group were the majority, it would be triggered, almost certainly, by a dispute over the right of our minority to challenge Smith and Jones in the public press by exercising the privileges we never denied them. I repeat: the regime they ran in the old WSL was no accident, but corresponded to their own political notions, capacities and needs.

So the history of the fusion and the facts about the causes of the split say incontrovertibly that if there were to be reunification on the 'unity' programme of the DCF, then the organisation would be immediately convulsed by intensified gang-warfare and probably paralysed. The paralysis this time would be worse - much worse - than it was before March 31.

Inevitably the organisation would begin to disintegrate. Many more reasonable people who do not want to spend their political lives in hopeless bickering would give up on the organisation. The subsequent split would be messier, more debilitating. There would be less left for us to get together after the second split, and what there was would probably be in a worse condition than we are now.

Think through the consequences of applying the medicine the DCF proposes, and you will realise that the immediate surgery decided on by the NC on March 31 was by far the least messy and least destructive way of organising the unavoidable split by the WSL from the Oxford group. The last possible 'unity programme' was the NC's resolution of March 10.

The only people who could gain from reunification would be the Oxford faction. For them it would be a license to come back into the organisation to do as much damage as possible before the inevitable second split.

There may be this or that comrades supporting the DCF who has not thought it through. But most of the vocal leaders of the DCF - Cunliffe, Levy, Parsons - know what's what, and I know no reasonable grounds to doubt that they consciously work for this outcome.

Their differences with the NC majority now are not differences about what best to do to defend and develop the WSL. They do not now have a standpoint in common with the NC. The NC's standpoint is that of the WSL and its interests. The standpoint of the chief DCF leaders is that of the Smith group and its interests. The two standpoints are incompatible. Not only do the DCF leaders endorse the viewpoint of the Smith group on what went wrong with the fusion; they also endorse the Smith group's proposals on what to do about it. That programme is to wreck the WSL.

PART 8: 'MASS EXPULSIONS' - THE EMOTIVE LANGUAGE OF POLITICAL CHARLATANISM

One of the most striking things about the DCF platform is the style and language, which is loose as well as Cuban-heeled. We've already looked at the wild abuse hurled at the WSL membership as "acolytes", "handraisers", etc. and at the oblique abuse, such as the argument that those who do not agree with the DCF are "sectarian idiots".

Charges are thrown around wildly. No obligation is accepted by the platform seriously to try to prove any of it, or even to define clearly what they are saying. All the contradictions in their ranks are ignored, and thus, for example, the document cites Cannon as a good source of rules for a model democratic-centralist organisation - ignoring, as we've seen, the fact Parsons thinks Cannon was a destructive sectarian bureaucrat.

Which of the authors of the platform would write: "no matter how programmatically correct may be the programmatic positions" of the WSL except tongue in cheek? Of course some signatories do believe that our basic politics are correct, but Cunliffe, Levy and Parsons don't.

Cunliffe, who walked out on our paper to produce instead a GLC-funded sheet, sees nothing odd in complaining now about the paper having to go down - temporarily - to 12 pages. Naturally, he wouldn't. Some of the other signatories might have been expected to see something odd - and distasteful - in it...

False, unjustified, self-indulgent emotionalism does service for argument, logic and principle. For example, the expression "mass expulsions" is scattered through the document.

You can say, of course, that 'masses' were expelled, but the DCF uses the expression to conjure up the image of a lawless tyranny rampaging through the organisation, picking innocent people off left right and centre.

The political reality is that an entity, a faction, was expelled as an entity. Individual members could avoid expulsion if they wanted simply by dissociating from the faction. They could secure a separate hearing if they simply indicated that they wished to put a different line from the general faction position. Every individual expelled chose to go out of the WSL as part of the faction, and to be represented by Smith at the hearing (thus proving, incidentally, that we were not wrong to insist that they remained a faction).

This or that individual member whose individual work could not be complained about was expelled on the same principle as that according to which Cunliffe - consistent fellow-traveller of the Oxford faction, and in the view of the EC the dirtiest little scoundrel within five miles of the WSL - was not expelled. We expelled the Oxford faction, the whole faction, and nothing but the faction.

Precedents

This question of "mass expulsions", and the way the new faction uses it, is worth giving some thought to.

Since when have the authors ^{of the DCF platform} been 'opposed', 'as a matter of principle' to what they call 'mass expulsions'? For this is not the first time we have resorted to 'such methods' as 'mass expulsions'.

We got in some practice for our recent atrocity against the Oxford faction just one year ago when we had a 'mass expulsion' of the group around Morrow, numbering something around 20 people, most of them potentially valuable youth. We had no choice but to expel them. Who protested about it? Nobody. And nobody talked emotively about "the method" of "mass expulsions", either, least of all those who are now members of the DCF. As a matter of fact, and strange to tell, nobody said that we needed a special conference to expel them, though they had four NC members (the Smith group had three who were expelled).

The first, bigger, wave of Spartacists (over 20 people) walked out of the old WSL. The second, smaller, wave was expelled. What were they expelled for? Formally and explicitly they were expelled for their political ideas!

This issue is discussed in the section on the "all-inclusive party".

In my view the Spartacists should have been expelled as agents of a hostile organisation as soon as it became clear what they were. (So should the RWL faction leaders in the WSL: early and decisive action could perhaps have saved some of the potentially very valuable youth they took out). They should not have been expelled for their political ideas.

Here the point to note is the shameless double-standards and hypocrisy of Levy and Cunliffe when they denounce us for our alleged expulsion of the Oxford group for their political ideas. What's the matter, comrades, are you suffering from amnesia? Or is it all right to expel people for some sectarian 'Trotskyist' ideas but not for others? Is it all right to expel people for their ideas if you hate them as you hate the Spartacists? Just as it was all right for Cunliffe, Smith, Jones and Levy to deprive Jo Q of access to the old WSL internal bulletin because he was isolated and his ideas were generally despised?

When the DCF go on about the inevitable dire consequences that will come to the WSL for 'expelling the Smith group for their politics', they start out from a plain lie - the Smith group were not, in fact or in formality, expelled for their political ideas - and go on to tie themselves in ridiculous knots and contradictions. If the expulsion of would-be Trotskyists for their ideas is the great crime you now say it is, ed Levy, then you should chastise yourself, not us. We have never expelled anyone for their political ideas. You have. Over 11 years ago, in December 1972, I wrote the following against what appeared to be an attempt to motivate the expulsion of two Lambertists from WF on their political views:

"There should be room within a revolutionary organisation for a very wide range of ideas and tendencies, provided that strict democratic centralist discipline governs the practical activity in the group. We will all agree on that, and I agree with [Keith] that we need to treat each case concretely. He is certainly right that a small propaganda group will have much less room for long-term coexistence of disparate tendencies than will a bigger organisation much of whose public activities will not come within the scope of the differences.

"But in reality that works itself out in 'spontaneous splittism'. Especially so since small propaganda groups like ours in fact have no holding power beyond a certain range of differences.

"[Keith] assumes that that which has to be 'propagated' is given: a group like ours needs democratic centralism because much of what has to be propagated for has to be developed, or at least sharpened and concretised. So there must be a great freedom of difference beyond the minimum basis of membership. Obviously we would expel a straight racist; but, say, a Zionist would have to be reasoned with carefully.

"The key point is that the basis of membership must be activity: the group exists to do a job in the class. All its discussions must in the long term relate to that fact of its being a combat organisation, not a discussion club. The combat organisation approach, strictly applied, provides a great deal of automatic regulation of political differences. If [the two Lambertists] had, as a condition of membership, to sell the 'Pabloite rag' three mornings or evenings a week and do a large range of other group work as a matter of course then they would, given their vast differences, feel the game wasn't worth the candle. Only when we demand nothing of them, when they can blandly refuse for months to work for the group and then cry 'political witch-hunt' when we do ask what they are doing in the group - only then will such people stick around".

The Morrow group

Nobody, as we have noted above, complained about "mass expulsions" when the Morrow group was expelled. To do so would be to say that the organisation is forever at the mercy of a minority because the minority can do what it likes and the majority must on no account resort to 'mass expulsions'. The utter stupidity

of such a general proposal should be obvious to even the five just men. It was obvious to them in the recent past.

The DCF's NC members - Oliver, Gunther, Levy, Cunliffe and Parsons - voted to expel the Morrow group last April. All of them without exception, and without a protest. They did not call for a special conference to do it - though it could have been argued that the conference just held in April 1983 had done nothing to license expulsions. On the contrary, it had accepted the Morrow group as part of the WSL and voted down an attempt to expel some of them.

At the NC Smith and Jones abstained on the vote to expel the Flackites on the grounds that 'Carolan is as bad' and they would not take sides. But at the EC they had collaborated in drawing up the charges - and in fact, we agreed to carry out the expulsions in the way they suggested for the sake of having a common front with them, and we stuck to their proposal even though they backed out.

Levy, Cunliffe, Parsons, Gunther and Oliver did not back out - to their credit. But then they were people with some sense of responsibility to the organisation, and they retained some capacity to think objectively and politically.

In late 1982, indeed, Oliver had been an outspoken advocate of expelling Morrow even if it meant that the Smith group went too. So the DCF's principled opposition to what they now emotively call 'mass expulsions' is fairly new - and very selective.

Worse still: not only did those five just men so recently support "the method" of "mass expulsions", but they voted to implement it "without a hearing". They say now that because we refused to hear each member of the Smith group separately (unless they dissociated from the common position), and forced them to choose a representative to put that common position, we therefore expelled the Oxford faction "without a hearing". Well, in that case, they share responsibility with us for expelling the Morrow faction "without a hearing" because they got exactly the same treatment.

How would the comrades go about squaring all this with the 'principles' they now implicitly proclaim and with their denunciations of 'our' methods of 'mass expulsions'?

For Cunliffe, Levy and Parsons, their answer - should they answer honestly - would have nothing to do with general political principles. Principles and consistency are not their strong suit. The true answer would be that, for the people who set the tone for the DCF, Smith is the measure of all things. The Oxford faction is special.

Other signatories to the DCF platform may not have thought this through. But in fact that is the only possible answer - that the Oxford faction is special. No organisation in which majority decisions are binding on every member, including those in the minority, can rule out having to eject a group of members. No Bolshevik, Leninist organisation that I have ever heard of has done so.

PART 9: THE DCF SUBSCRIBES TO THE PRINCIPLE OF DEFERENCE TO SMITH.
AFGHANISTAN.

It is necessary, I think, to back up in detail what I say in the introduction about the DCF's acceptance of the principle of deference to Smith.

IB 92, signed by eight NC members (five of whom are now in the DCF, the other three expelled with the Smith group), has a section entitled "Editorial Board".

It says, under point (c): "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 inside for more leisureed 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".

This is combined with an insistence on minority access to the public press on other issues.

This can only be explained on the principle of deference to Smith, for the following reasons. At fusion there was a clear majority for the I-CL position on Afghanistan, but (from motives of wanting to ease the fusion for the old WSL leadership) we left the issue undecided so that the new organisation could discuss it and - it was agreed - reach a decision within a few months.

We did not manage that. Sharp divisions emerged, and it became plain that there was no chance of an amicable discussion, and, later still, that there was no chance of any sort of discussion. The dropping away of the old WSL sectarians and the hiving-off of the Morrow group reduced those thinking that the WSL should support the USSR presence in Afghanistan to a minority of about 25%. But as the majority for 'troops out' grew, the chances of this becoming WSL policy through any reasonable process of discussion receded. The paper was silent on Afghanistan for over two years.

If the I-CL had known that the new WSL would be without a line on Afghanistan for nearly three years, we would probably have insisted on a vote at the fusion conference. Certainly I would have fought for that. personally.

Why did we let the situation drag on? For the first two years of the fusion, as relations between the two sides worsened, we did not push the issue because we did not want to add to the conflicts, and we still hoped to heal them. Then, when it became plain that unless something was done we would have an indefinite period of silence on Afghanistan, I began - before the August conference last year - to argue for a decision. It was quickly clear that the crammed agenda of the August conference would not permit even the most perfunctory discussion on Afghanistan. So we pressed for, at least, freedom of reportage and discussion in the paper. (This had after all been written into the fusion platform: "In the meantime the different views will be expressed publicly in the press of the movement.")

The Smith group would not hear of this. They were a declining minority on the question, but they would insist on silencing us until they had had their full discussion. In fact they resisted any discussion. It was "provocative", "an outrage", an attempt by me to "split the movement".

Last August Kinnell and I wrote this about the agitation on Afghanistan:

"What happened? At the EC on July 14 Carolan raised the question of putting Afghanistan on the August 26-27 conference agenda. The EC decided to put it on the NC agenda of August 13, with a view to deciding whether it

could be on the conference agenda.

"At the EC on July 29 we discussed the NC agenda in more detail. It was immediately obvious that there would not be time for any serious discussion on Afghanistan. The idea of debating it at conference was dropped. Kinnell, who had missed the July 14 NC meeting, explained that he would have been against putting it on the conference agenda anyway, but strongly favoured starting coverage and discussion in the paper. The EC decided to do that.

"At the NC on August 13, Smith raised this issue as an 'outrage'. In doing so he insisted (as he does in IB 63) that the EC decision had been to start discussion in the paper 'from a troops out position'.

"Kinnell (who had moved the successful EC resolution) explained that it was not: it was simply to have coverage and discussion (in which of course both the views, or all the views, within the organisation would be represented).

"Now you might think that Smith would be pleased to hear that the EC decision gave the pro-troops minority equal rights, rather than favouring troops out. Not a bit of it. He insisted hotly that the decision had been for a troops out position.

"For people to misrepresent decisions by making them out as more favourable is bad, but comprehensible. Why should anyone want to misrepresent decisions so as to make them unfavourable? It makes no sense except factionally. To keep his faction on the boil, Smith has to claim that they have been done down.

"There are no grounds for a complaint of lack of democracy. The pro-troops minority - and it clearly is a small minority - has been given equal rights with the troops out majority.

"Behind Smith's complaint, no doubt, was a feeling that the pro-troops minority would not be able to keep its end up in a debate (and on Afghanistan they could not expect the IMG/SL and RCP to do the job for them, as they have done in the debate in the paper on Ireland). But the faction's lack of ability to argue its politics coherently is not a question of democracy.

"Smith does raise one question worth answering: why push the issue of Afghanistan now?

"When we fused we gave ourselves a set period of months to decide a majority position on Afghanistan. Everyone knew that there was a majority in the new WSL for Russian troops out, but for the sake of harmony and conciliation we decided not to push it.

"25 months into the fusion we are no nearer a decision. The factional atmosphere in the WSL rules out the sort of discussion we looked forward to. (We would just have another round of accusations about 'reformism', 'capitulating to imperialism', etc.) Meanwhile the terrible slaughter goes on in Afghanistan. There are over three million refugees. It is indeed a mini-Vietnam.

"Smith/Jones's NC rejection of the mini-Vietnam comparison expressed the essential difference. Vietnam, they said, was a reactionary war; Afghanistan is a progressive war. I.e. the expansion of Russian Stalinism by conquest is progressive. Trotsky would not agree; we do not agree. On this Smith/Jones and their co-thinkers have a quasi-Stalinist position.

"Our lack of coverage, i.e. our silence on the Kremlin's crimes, over the last two years, has been an implicit endorsement of the pro-troops line.

"We cannot continue being silent into the indefinite future. Therefore, either take a decision - even if it is only a vote-out - and/or open the paper to coverage and discussion.

"In that sense, the issue does reflect a deterioration in the organisation.

The comrades who have adopted such a consistent 'dog in the manger' attitude since the April conference should examine their own consciences about that. Meanwhile the organisation has to function." (IB 70)

In fact we carried a report in the paper. But there was still no progress in setting up a discussion. The Smith group did not take up the option of publishing their opinions in the paper.

On the eve of the split, Jones was invited to debate Afghanistan at a youth school: but though he came to the school he nominated Cunliffe (who turned out to support troops out!) to speak instead.

The situation was that Smith and Jones were incapable of defending their position. They had adopted it at a time when it was held by most 'orthodox Trotskyists'. Nearly ^{all} of those have now changed their minds, leaving Smith and Jones to argue their own case as they can.

By now they would most likely have gone, like Cunliffe, with the tide of 'world Trotskyism', and changed their position - but their problem was that the 'main enemy at home' - us - had called for troops out right from the beginning. So they were beached and trapped - left stranded by the receding tide of 'Trotskyist' support for the Russian army, and incapable on their own of defending their position, but unable to retreat without admitting that we had been right.

So they tried to freeze the organisation, and for a long time did freeze it. There could be no movement towards getting a formal recognition for the actual majority line until the worker leadership had their thirst for discussion satisfied: but in practice they refused to discuss.

A similar pattern was established on the theory of imperialism. The Smith group argued bitterly against us expressing our views, even in discussion articles in the paper; but at the WSL summer school last year they were avowedly not able to argue any case on imperialism. They were determined only to denounce us and to stymie any discussion.

On both these issues the Smith group played shameless 'prestige politics' and used dog-in-the-manger obstruction to stop the majority expressing its politics.

It is all this which is crystallised in the quotation above from IB 92, which was originally produced by the Smith group. The main idea expressed in IB 92 on how to deal with political differences is that the Smith minority should have full rights in the public press, more or less equal to those of the organisation. But on the issues where Smith and Jones have nothing to say and can't defend their minority position - Afghanistan and imperialism - not even a majority line (on Afghanistan) can be put in the paper.

No other principle than deference to Smith can justify what the DCF say about Afghanistan. For how much longer than two years would the DCF want the organisation to wait before reporting on Afghanistan or expressing (even in discussion format) the political position of the big majority of the WSL (and of four of the five DCF NC members)? Until internal discussion is completed? But you need two sides in a discussion. What if the Smith group continued to procrastinate - as they would? When the DCF endorses what the Smith group said about Afghanistan in IB 92, it is reasonable to think that their answer must be: 'Give Smith and Jones the time they need to come round'.

So, if the DCF get their way, minorities will have a constitutional right of access to the public press except when Smith and Jones have got themselves into a double-bind, as on Afghanistan - and then the majority must give up its right even to discuss the issue out of deference to the worker leadership. If we don't give it up, then Levy and Cunliffe will denounce us for disruption, tyranny, and lese-majeste. For Smith is the measure of all things, amen.

This is the politics of deference - rendered all the more shameless because of the naked double standards it is forced to operate. The DCF's

posture towards us turns them into would-be enforcers for the Smith group - people who will make the WSL safe for Smith by enforcing the necessary deference. Our fault here, for Cunliffe, Parsons and Levy, is that we do not meekly bow down and let the 'worker leadership', irresponsible and ignorant though it is on this question, have its way.

On Afghanistan, in 1980, we were right against almost the entire 'orthodox Trotskyist' current. What most of the currents of degenerate 'Trotskyism' now say about Afghanistan amounts to them giving the retrospective verdict that the I-CL has been greatly superior to them on this question. For us that is gratifying, of course (though, speaking for myself, I no longer care very much about this sort of 'Trotskyist public opinion'). But for the Smith group it is the verdict of their political High Court - the 'world Trotskyist movement', towards which they experience, when they are out of step with it, the mortal fear of people who know themselves to be its satellites. (It was not thus with Smith and Jones ten years ago. But they are older now, and no longer naively confident about themselves).

They could not themselves admit our political superiority in 1980 on Afghanistan over the 'World Trotskyist Movement', without undercutting much that they say about us, about the world Trotskyist movement, and about themselves.

A boundless deference-demanding arrogance and immoderate pretensions at the top imply slavish subservience below for their subordinates. Think what their demand on Afghanistan implies for us.

The invasion of Afghanistan was a very important political event - the first direct expansion of the USSR since 1944-5. It was a major event for 'world Trotskyism' because of the quasi-Stalinist/soft-Stalinist undercurrent it showed to exist in most groups calling themselves Trotskyist. We took a stand against it and in defence of the peoples of Afghanistan which then isolated us in the ranks of 'world Trotskyism'. Then things moved on and most of them changed their minds and back-tracked. Now, out of deference to the 'worker leadership' Smith and Jones we must be silent on the whole matter - indefinitely. (That's what it means in practice, though they don't say that). We must be silent, and last year should have agreed to be silent.

We should do this out of deference to people who - to conclude - cannot argue their position; were always in the minority, and latterly in a small minority, in the WSL; who were nakedly and shamelessly factional on the question; and whose prime concern was not WSL politics at all but their own prestige.

Endorsing IB 92, the DCF endorses the Oxford group's feeble ideology of deference to Smith, and champions the demand for special treatment of the 'worker leadership'. One or two of them may not know that or want that. Nonetheless that is what the documents of the DCF have saddled them with.

In its early stages in the mid-'60s, the WF/I-CL tendency was shaped and moulded by our reaction against the terrible faults and often outrageous practices of the groups calling themselves Trotskyist. We tried to draw positive conclusions about correct political practice from what was wrong with the SLL, Militant, etc.

One of the most important lessons we took from the degeneration of the SLL/WRP was the importance of telling the truth and of maintaining a scrupulous, conscientious and loyal attitude to our opponents (which is not the same as being mealy-mouthed about them).

Never very scrupulous about such things, the SLL started to lie systematically about its opponents from the mid-'60s. Blatant lies were invented and put in circulation - for example, the new-minted lie that Ernest Mandel and Michel Pablo had supported the suppression of the Hungarian Revolution in 1956. For a decade the SLL/WRP kept in circulation a pamphlet, 'Who Are The International Socialists?', with a couple of chapters on our tendency which lied that we supported the British Army in Northern Ireland in 1969. When the IMG sent colonists into Cowley, Smith - according to his own account - spread the rumour that they were police spies. (He later apologised to the IMG, saying that Gerry Healy had told him to do it).

As well as telling full lies, the SLL would distort and misrepresent their opponents. They indulged in hysterical campaigns against positions they falsely attributed to their opponents. For example, around the time of the Russian invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, there was a tremendous outcry in the SLL's press against the IS/SWP for allegedly holding that the USSR is 'fascist'. Maybe the IS/SWP should logically hold that position, but they didn't and they don't.

The few old cadres of the SLL who survived through that period had to swallow this change-over to practices that they had been taught by Trotsky's books were Stalinist and incompatible with honest working class politics or Marxism. New cadres were taught systematically to lie about and distort the positions of their opponents.

They were encouraged to obliterate the distinction between what people actually said and did, and what the SLLers thought was logically implied in the positions they did hold. Cadres learned that it was their duty to 'lie for the party', as the distinction was then lost between a position which might logically imply bad conclusions, and advocating those bad conclusions themselves. Dialogue between practising Healyites and their opponents became impossible - and, in part anyway, that was what the SLL leaders intended.

The DCF's methods of polemic

Flicking through the IBs before writing this document, I was reminded of that, and of how important and irreplaceable it is to try honestly to conduct political discussions without lies and with as few distortions as possible. (Some exaggerations are inevitable in heated battles).

For the better part of two years - since the Smith group re-divided the fused organisation into its component parts back in May 1982, by declaring their side of the organisation a distinct tendency, the internal life of the new WSL has come more and more to resemble the 'common' political life shared by the SLL and the other groups in, say, the year 1968. In the last six months before we threw the Smith group out, political questions were scarcely discussed, but the denunciations just became shriller and shriller.

In this respect the DCF continues the tradition of the Smith group, which continued in a diluted and dispirited form the worst traditions of the

Healyites. The DCF now - just like the Parsons group at the 1983 conferences - is only possible because a terrible debasement, crudification and erosion of the norms and standards of democratic centralist organisation has taken place in the factional scrums.

We have seen above some of the DCF's untruths, hysteria, and ridiculous constructions on events. But there are a lot more.

Many of the items taken separately are merely comic. But there is nothing funny about the overall drift of the DCF. The following list is by no means exhaustive.

Real faults of the WSL are exploited demagogically

VALID CRITICISMS: In so far as the DCF picks up on valid criticisms of the organisation - education, the de-politicisation of the leading committees; the tendency of some comrades and branches to do their own thing for lack of practical day-to-day leadership - it uses them to construct a shameless frame-up.

We - the EC majority - are the ones who have done almost everything that has been done to keep the organisation centrally functioning. On the other side Levy is the only one who has done anything much - and after April 1982 even he withdrew to a serious extent into relatively compartmentalised areas of trade union work. Not until January of this year did he turn at all seriously to the paper sales organiser job he was appointed to in July 1983 (see IB 62). Cunliffe never did anything but the paper, and he walked off that in January.

The Smith group de-politicised the leading committees. IB 92 says: "leading committees have been transformed into largely a-political arenas for the moving of disciplinary and organisational resolutions". The Smith group did the transforming. IB 97 summarises the main points of the record since the August conference (though the problem had started before then).

INTERNATIONAL WORK: The faction denounces the majority of the EC for the failures of our international work when, as part of the fusion agreement, the entire international work was conducted more or less as they chose by the Smith group. Cunliffe supposedly devoted half his working week to it until he resigned as international secretary after the November 19 1983 NC.

We are guilty of many stupidities, but the stupidities that led inevitably to the collapse of the international work were the sole responsibility of the Smith group, including Levy and Cunliffe, against our protests. This was the one area in which the terms of the fusion committed us to let Smith, Jones and Cunliffe continue unimpeded to do what they were doing before the fusion and in which we therefore deferred to them.

This went on right up to the very day of the collapse of TILC in April 1983. A WSL declaration to the TILC meeting after the RWL and LOR had said in so many words that they were out to split the WSL (see IB 59) was severely cut down and diluted after Smith and Jones declared that they simply would not accept the full text of the declaration, whatever votes there might be about it.

Then, as the final TILC session opened, Smith and Jones simply walked out, leaving Kinnell and myself to pick up the pieces (see IB 59, again. Cunliffe had already left the meeting place before the TILC session, in perhaps understandable exasperation at Smith's and Jones's ultimatum about the WSL declaration, drafted by him.)

Concerned for conciliation and cooperation, we did not attack Smith and Jones at the time for their walk-out, nor for their ultimatum. But it is grotesque that we are now blamed for the failings of the international work!

After that final April 1983 TILC meeting, we made proposals for further international work essentially similar to those eventually decided by the

November 1983 NC. Smith and Jones said we need more discussion and a fundamental reappraisal. We deferred, again. Nothing was done for months as we waited for them to come forward with their ideas. Eventually Smith and Jones came forward with nothing, and Cunliffe with a proposal to go for fusion with the USFI.

Scurrilous criticisms are made under cover of high-sounding sentiments

'DIGNITY' AND CAROLAN-BAITING: The DCF's chosen speaker at the London/Oxford area aggregate, Oliver, went on at length about how 'undignified' the manner of the expulsion of the Smith group was. He makes the same point in IB 111 part 2, p.4. Nevertheless the DCF enshrines in its basic document for conference (IB 92) a piece of petty-minded 'Carolan-baiting', making it a matter of alleged principle that I should do local work.

Oliver indecently combines the most self-righteous denunciations of 'the centre' for its inefficiencies, real and imaginary, with full-scale and unqualified support for Cunliffe's disruption of the centre. This culminates in an alliance with Cunliffe for 'democracy' and... dignity.

Simple decency is, I think, a little lower on the scale than dignity, Dave, but I'd settle for that to be getting on with. And the Smith group got the 'dignity' allotted to them by the constitution they voted for in 1981.

LEADERSHIP BY LOCAL ACTIVITY: The DCF - in the course of pursuing the 'get Carolan' line - endorses a view of the relationship of political ideas and analysis with immediate political practice which is more akin to the 'serve the people' quackery of various sects of Maoists than to Marxism.

"... 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".

The notion that there is, or should be, no separation between the leading committees and the rank and file is demagogic nonsense. On the same principle there would be no separation between the revolutionary organisation and the working class as a whole. The whole idea of our politics being based on scientific thinking implies a differentiation between those with greater experience, knowledge, commitment, etc., and those with less. Marxism has to be learned and studied. The democratic element is a constant interaction between the elected leading bodies and the rank and file, and the differentiation not being static; it is not the obliteration of any separation between different levels in the organisation. (On this see 'Building the WSL', IB 107).

The DCF's proposal would limit the work of the national leadership to what it can do in its spare time from local work. The model is Smith - a leader by virtue of his local activity. In IB 85, p.13-14, Smith argues that his local work round the C. factory fully vindicates him as industrial organiser.

If there is any sense in all this, it is the idea that political errors flow from lack of involvement in grass-roots work. In IB 107, while generally opposing IB 92, Scott argues that we have been sectarian on B. through lack of contact.

Now obviously errors can flow from lack of sufficiently close contact and observation. One of the advantages of having an organisation, as opposed to dispersed local activists, is that there is a pooling of experience.

But as a general sweeping statement, the idea that involving our full-timers

in local work is the way to keep ourselves straight politically is nonsense. It would make us by definition incapable of being right about any events outside Britain or more than a short time back in history! Or more immediately, take the O. I rejoined the O. in 1975 after eight years out of it, but I have never been more than marginally active. In which of the left papers will you find more accurate assessments of the O. over the last six years than what I have written in our paper and before it in W*? Not in Socialist Press, for sure. Not in Militant, either, for all its immersion in the O.

The image of the full-timers being in an ivory tower, miles away from the grass-roots activists, is in any case ludicrous given the reality of a small organisation. The full-timers, for example, do not just have knowledge of, or contact with, the work in B.; in the person of Hill we are responsible for a large proportion of the day-to-day work directly. (Which doesn't prove necessarily that we're right. But if we're wrong, it's certainly not for lack of contact). It is probably more of a problem that our full-timers are too much taken up with mechanical day-to-day tasks, and do not give enough time to the specifically political/ideological jobs of leading the organisation.

THE 'HOLY SCROLLS': "We are also", says the DCF platform, "seeing a degeneration to the 'holy scrolls' version of Marxism..." This comes from some of those, and the allies of the others of those, who for two years have been condemning us with pious horror for 'revisionism' and unwarranted theoretical innovation!

On at least two points the DCF condemns us for things which we did not do, but DCF members did do.

THE E.C. AND FULL-TIMERS: The DCF makes a big thing against us of insisting that the EC should include other comrades as well as full-timers. At the May 2 1983 NC (after the April conference), the 'WSL bureaucracy' had to argue against a proposal from Parsons to have only full-timers on the EC, excluding Jones, Parkinson, and Collins. Parsons is now in the DCF.

'BUILDING THE WSL': IB 92 denounces me on the grounds that I "tried to force to a vote at last April's conference" the 'Building the WSL' document (IB 50, reprinted in IB 107). I didn't. Gunther, however, now a member of the DCF, was in favour of pushing it to a vote then. (He strongly supported the document then. He now signs IB 92 which condemns it as a blueprint for bureaucratic tyranny).

The DCF proposals would remove any centralism from the organisation.
The national aggregates/conferences every three or four months would deprive the NC of any real authority. The DCF would also, however, seriously dissolve the functions of the EC.

NO 'LINE' BETWEEN NCs?: The thrust of much that is said by the DCF about the smaller committees is massively to diminish the EC and OSC. Ridiculously, they say (IB 92) that the OSC "is not a constitutional committee of the WSL". And they argue (IB 92 again) that:

"Many of the issues over which there has been dispute in terms of coverage in the paper (e.g. analysis of the TUC's position in the run-up to the 'Black Wednesday' betrayal of the NGA) are not issues on which the League has had any adopted policy".

Now the EC did take a position. So do the DCF mean that between NCs there is no line? Unless the EC can take decisions, there isn't.

Now the constitution is perfectly clear. The EC "is responsible for... reacting to events that require immediate action; and for political leadership".

But, proceeding from rationalisations of Smith's position as a minority on the EC in December 1983, the DCF arrive at the idea that there is no WSL leadership between NCs! There is no WSL line on the living class struggle, no majority and minority.

So what does the paper say? Presumably it is obliged to print every article on any new development submitted by every member of the organisation. And if one comrade thinks, for example, that a general strike is the slogan of the hour, and another thinks it is suicidal and disastrous? We print both views and let the readers choose? Or we call an emergency aggregate? And if a couple of weeks later there is a sharp turn in the situation (and there were a number of sharp turns during the NGA struggle)? We call another aggregate?

The underlying train of thought, of course, in IB 92 is that we print whatever Smith writes (or, occasionally, Jones, or Cunliffe on behalf of Smith and Jones). But if you take the issue as it is presented to the organisation and to the upcoming conference - that is, as a general idea - then it means that there is no WSL line on issues that arise in the class struggle between NCs. Either the paper would be a chaos... or else this idea would in fact give massively increased power to - the Editor! And that can't be what they want right now!

THE EC AND THE EB: The DCF, in effect though rather incoherently, proposes the replacement of the EC by an EB.

Formally the EC would continue to have jurisdiction over the EB. In fact the new EB, as described and advocated by the DCF, would be a mini-NC. "It should draw in comrades active in trade union, O and international solidarity work, and represent a political cross-section of the viewpoints within the League as a whole". The DCF say it should function "within the guidelines of adopted policy of the League as a whole and its leading bodies" - but it is unclear what that means, given the idea (above) that there is no WSL policy established when the EC takes a decision.

At best, the comrades do not know quite what they are saying. The probable result of the sort of mini-NC EB they propose would be a chaotic committee structure with the lines of jurisdiction unclear. The psychology of this for Cunliffe, Smith and Jones was, of course, a yearning to get away from the EC and NC where they were the minority, or at least to get a new arena for the gang warfare they were pursuing fruitlessly on those committees.

On a number of points, the DCF proposes ideas which make no sense if followed through logically.

BALANCE-SHEET OF FUSION: Oliver (IB 111 pt.2) responds to the breakdown of the fusion by bemoaning the fact that the expulsion means that we cannot draw a balance-sheet jointly with Smith and Jones! "How can we have a proper balance sheet of the fusion with nearly the whole of the old WSL now expelled... A proper assessment has been blocked".

Perhaps we should draw this joint balance-sheet over a few 'kiss and make up for tonight' drinks? Maybe we could include Morrow? It might be an advantage: you could at least, occasionally, talk about politics with Morrow.

COMBATTING THE WSL 'BUREAUCRATS': The DCF, like the Smith group, has some trouble in explaining why the majority in the WSL is the majority. How have these purblind 'sectarians' and 'bureaucrats', Caroland and Kinnell, managed to make a majority of the organisation from 'acolytes' and 'handraisers'.

In an EC discussion, Smith declared: "The intimidation by which the majority became a majority is all political argument. But it's a wrong method. People are hammered for hours". (IB 89, p.19). I.e. what defines us as 'bureaucrats' is... that we argue too vigorously and tenaciously for our

ideas!

The DCF follows this up as follows (IB 92, p.5): "We should turn with urgency to the promotion of a programme of education aimed not at 'lecturing' members or bureaucratic imposition of the present EC majority's point of view and crushing of dissent in 'one to one' encounters, but at the cultivation of a more advanced level of debate and discussion, ensuring that all our comrades, whatever their views on disputed questions, assimilate the basics of revolutionary Marxism".

What does 'bureaucratic imposition' of the majority position mean here? Have there ever been classes, educationals or schools in which an attempt has been made to silence the Smith group or others? When? Where? In fact we have had very great difficulty in getting the Smith faction to argue its case. It was always 'unprepared', etc. That was our experience on imperialism at the WSL summer school, or on the EEC at the broad groups day school. At the recent youth school Jones was invited to put their case on Afghanistan, but he said he was unprepared and instead nominated Cunliffe to speak (though Cunliffe now agrees with the majority on USSR withdrawal...)

'Crushing of dissent in one-to-one encounters'? So the comrades want to ban supporters of the majority from having private political discussions with - whom? New comrades? We should set up a debate for each new comrade? We shouldn't talk to vacillating members of the DCF unless Cunliffe or Cliver is there? Members of the majority should not talk 'one to one' to each other?

Of course it isn't really funny. This nonsense is part of a document for voting at conference. If it were passed, some Levy or other - were he to continue in the organisation - could argue that it was out of order to have one-to-one discussions.

The psychology of this is the paranoid inflation of their opponents which has been the characteristic way Smith, Jones and Levy have related to Kinnell and, especially, to me. It is one aspect of the underlying thread which runs right through the DCF (though it never quite surfaces), as it did through the Smith faction - the urge to stifle, eliminate, silence and somehow get rid of the EC majority. It was most clearly expressed from early on in the fusion in Smith's and Jones's attitude to me writing in the paper.

The DCF want to get rid of one-to-one discussions - and make a magical leap to "a more advanced level of debate" which ensures that all our comrades "whatever their views on the disputed questions, assimilate the basics of revolutionary Marxism". Whoever wrote this muddled a-political idiocy is long overdue for promotion to "a more advanced level of debate"! So our educationals should discuss the textbook ABCs with rigorous exclusion of any relevance they may have to the 'disputed questions' - that is, they should reduce Marxist education to dehydrated and lifeless formulas. And how should we discuss the 'disputed questions' - if, by decree of the DCF, 'the basics of revolutionary Marxism' are declared irrelevant to deciding these questions?

Parsons and Oliver have already tried to separate organisation from Marxist politics. Here they try to separate politics from Marxism and Marxist education!

WHAT TO DO ABOUT THE 'EVIL GENIUSES'? The DCF's entire politics thus point to a proposal to expel certain people (Kinnell, myself), to prohibit us from talking to other members about politics, or at the very least to bar us from the leading committees. But in fact the DCF only dares to go in for the pettifogging small-beer proposal that I should do local labour movement and WSL branch work instead of the national political work of the WSL. And they don't even say 'instead of', though that is the underlying thought.

PART 11: CONCLUSION: WHAT SHOULD THE WSL DO ABOUT THE DCF?

If the facts and quotations I have cited, and the arguments I have drawn from them, are true, then the plain conclusion must be that the DCF is more akin to an entrust formation working for the Smith group than to any normal faction. Some members of the DCF probably do not understand that, or wish it, but that is how the DCF is defined by its published platform and its chief leaders.

The DCF is not merely the product of disturbances which might be expected to arise within the ranks of the WSL after the trauma of the expulsions. It is not that people who are politically with the WSL remain with us but have some sympathy with Smith and regret or oppose the break. No: on every point the DCF is close to or identical with the Smith group, and distinct from and venomously antagonistic to the WSL. A number of the DCF members are, on the basis of declared positions on such issues as Stalinism, the LP, women's liberation, imperialism, the EEC, the 'world Trotskyist movement', etc., closer to the WSL than to the Smith group. But even those, by signing the platform, have declared themselves confused and irresponsible towards their own nominal politics. Jointly with representatives of the sectarian wing of the WSL on the LP at last year's conference, they co-sign a declaration that the WSL is 'sectarian', 'confused', 'ambiguous' on the LP. Jointly with those who have defended the most scandalous opportunism in local government, they sign a declaration that the WSL is 'ambiguous' on that issue. They endorse an unclear but nevertheless unmistakeable version of Parsons' broad-church views on the 'world Trotskyist movement'. On Afghanistan, they demand that our press denies access to their own position out of deference to Smith; meanwhile they demand automatic access for Smith on all other issues!

According to the normal operation of political attraction and repulsion, most of the DCF should have long ago gone naturally to the Smith group. If they have not, it is because it is in the interests of the Smith group for them to stay on a while and organise a faction that, they hope, will garner a few of the comrades willing to support agitation for 'democracy in the WSL' and take them to the Smith group.

Why else, for example, would they have proceeded so rashly to form a new faction, with such a vituperative platform, with the consequence of lessening their impact within the WSL? About twice as many people signed Levy's petition against the expulsions as are in the DCF. By declaring a faction, the leaders of the DCF halved their forces, and compelled some comrades who sympathise with them on the ejection of Smith to distance themselves. Nevertheless, the logic of their short-term perspectives, the need to bind people together for a split, compelled them to go ahead and form a faction.

This is not a normal faction. Essentially the DCF is a by-product of the attempt by the NC to make a distinction between the hard organised Smith group and its auxiliaries and close allies, like Cunliffe, Parsons and Levy. The NC expelled the organised Smith group for disruption and left it up to Levy, Cunliffe, and the other close supporters to choose individually which side they were on. Plainly they have chosen - but, having chosen, serve their side as best they can by remaining a while to do a job in the WSL.

It is perfectly understandable that they should have chosen to do that, since we gave them the option. There is no ground for surprise. The indignation we should feel towards them is not that they have taken advantage of the openings we gave them to help their side, but that they operate with such foul unprincipled Cunliffite methods as I have described above.

Should the NC have made a cleaner sweep and expelled people like Cunliffe and Parsons? And Levy? That's a matter of opinion, and there were differences of opinion at the NC caucus on March 30. There was a minority who wanted to expel Cunliffe and Parsons. (Nobody proposed expelling Levy, or

anybody else). I was in the minority, but nevertheless I think on balance it was better to err on the side of caution, and better to have the sort of problem we have now with the DCF than perhaps needlessly to expel people who might, or just conceivably might, be saved for the organisation - Levy is the obvious example, though right now there is not the slightest reason to regard Levy as anything but an agent of the Smith group.

Because this is not a normal faction, but plainly an agency of a hostile organisation, the WSL is not obliged by the constitution, in my opinion, to allow the DCF to continue in our organisation so that they can split at their own convenience. There is a clear case for expelling the majority of the DCF. Nobody who makes it clear that he or she will not accept the decisions of a conference if they go against them has a normal right to continue in membership: the NC would have the right to expel a majority of the DCF on those grounds alone. Whether the NC should do that or not is a matter of policy, in my opinion.

The case for throwing them out is that to allow people to continue who say they will leave if the conference goes against them is to undermine the organisation and the conference itself. We teach lack of seriousness towards the organisation if we allow people who are plainly agents of a hostile group - Cunliffe, Levy, Parsons, at least - to operate in the WSL with impunity until it suits them to leave.

The case for letting them continue in the organisation until the conference, when most of them will leave, is basically that this is an exceptional situation. The NC on March 31 knowingly allowed the fellow-travellers of the Smith group to stay in the organisation, deliberately left the choice up to them. Even if some of them were hopeless, others might conceivably even now be saved for the WSL. To act against them now, a few weeks before the conference, is not necessary and therefore not advisable. They are not a threat to the organisation. They cannot paralyse it as the Smith group did. The situation will resolve itself at the conference a month from now.

My own conclusion, therefore, is that while we must define what's happening clearly and honestly for ourselves, and brand the DCF for what it is, we should let things develop naturally in the organisation towards the conference. The DCF is no more than a secondary feature of the split between the WSL and the Smith group. Things will sort themselves out in due course. And the DCF can, despite themselves, serve the WSL by forcing each member to think clearly about the organisational principles of revolutionary Marxism.