

JUNE 1984

THE SIXTY MYTHS OF COMRADE CUNLIFFE

or

THE DISCUSSION SUMMED UP

Carolyn

A reply to Cunliffe's document, "60 Baseless Myths, Lies and Legends..."

Part 1 introduces the reply and deals with Cunliffe's item 45

Part 2 deals with Cunliffe's discussion of the DOW's proposals, and specifically with items 46, 50, 51.

Part 2A deals with Cunliffe's response on the 'worker leadership' issue, specifically with items 10 and 13.

Part 3 deals with the remaining items, in numerical order.

"... As the vilest writer has his readers, so the greatest liar has his believers; and it often happens that, if a lie be believed for only an hour, it has done its work, and there is no farther occasion for it. Falsehood flies, and truth comes limping after it, so that when men come to be undeceived it is too late; the jest is over and the tale has had its effect..."

Jonathan Swift

Cunliffe has written a concise account of what he sees as the issues raised in the dispute between the WSL and the Smith group and latterly between the WSL and the DCF. One thing that should be noticed in his document is the complete and utter identification with Smith and the Smith faction. Cunliffe is 100% with them and has not one single word of criticism to say against them. He assumes and takes completely for granted the identification between the Smith group and DCF. Some DCF members wouldn't, perhaps - but that's their problem.

Much of Cunliffe's document is bluff and bluster. But some of it breaks new ground. All in all, for reasons which will become apparent, it is an extremely valuable document which should help clarify the issues for some comrades.

* For the first time he spells out part, and implies the rest, of Smith's real programme for unity.

* He scurries away from many of the proposals which the DCF are putting to conference in IB 92. He does this Cunliffe-fashion by denying that they ever made those proposals -- as if he forgets what they have been writing.

* Some of his attempts to 'reply' on points made by us are of such a character that they will stand as evidence against the case he is making for anybody who bothers to think about the issues.

* One of the most notable things about the document is that it is plainly written from a viewpoint unusual in our ranks - that of an old WSL sectarian opponent of fusion. He brings into it the most ridiculous interpretations of what the I-CL was doing and hoped to do in the fusion.

I'm told that at the conference of the DCF stuff like this - that the I-CL went into the fusion with predatory intentions -- was removed from Cunliffe's draft of the DCF platform. In this document Cunliffe goes his own way. Plainly he does not think much of the assurances of the ex-I-CL DCF members that his assumptions were not true. And what do they think of Cunliffe's document?

THE CONDITION FOR UNITY: GIVE SMITH/DCF THE MAJORITY

By far the most important thing in the document is contained in item 45, where Cunliffe replies to the argument that "Unity with the expelled members is impossible". I quote the item in full.

"It certainly is impossible along Carolan's sectarian path of seeking to bludgeon opponents into submission. It is impossible to impose a bureaucratic straitjacket on them. But, given the type of changes spelled out in IB 92, and a change in the majority control of League leading bodies, it WOULD be possible to unite in a democratic centralist relationship and a common party with the expelled 35 - and with many more people as well!!" (emphasis added).

This paragraph contains a precious truth, even though it is garnished in lies. Cunliffe says: the only basis on which unity with the Smith group is possible is "a change in the majority control of League leading bodies" -- that is, the removal of the present leadership and, though he doesn't say it plainly, the assumption of control of the leading committees by the Smith group, perhaps in alliance with deferential 'independents' like Parsons.

Cunliffe is absolutely right for once: the only basis on which unity with Smith would be possible would be if the WSL were prepared to give Smith control of the organisation.

This is a valuable admission from Cunliffe because it may help us get away from the vapid and stupid idea on which the DCF have been trading and campaigning so far: that all we need do to get constructive unity, or at least get back to the pre-March WSL, is to let the Smith group back in and ensure certain minority rights. No it is not.

If we let the Smith group back in without the change of control that Cunliffe now spells out, then there will immediately be an upsurge of fierce gang-warfare factionalism which will - after paralysing and perhaps partially wrecking the organisation - inevitably lead to a second split. There will be a continuation of the escalating internal battles which led to the expulsion, only more embittered. The present 'unity' campaign by Smith outside and the DCF inside the WSL is only a continuation of those battles by other means.

In his half-clear posing of the issues Cunliffe lets the truth slip out. He forgot for a moment the DCF line that all we have to do to get unity is let the Smith group back in and ensure minority rights. He forgot that, given the balance of forces, to say what he says is to give the game away.

On all the major political issues, the Smith group (and its co-thinkers like Cunliffe) would be in a small minority if readmitted. Far from hoping to win a majority on issues such as tasks and perspectives and Afghanistan, they have not even bothered to table resolutions or amendments. So Cunliffe does not actually, in the given relationship of forces in the WSL, think unity is possible.

What is he playing at, then? Trying to change the balance of forces in favour of Smith. Cunliffe is hypocritically agitating for a reunification which he does not believe is actually possible, as a technique for damaging the WSL and perhaps leading a few stray comrades more to the Smith group.

THE ACTUAL ALTERNATIVES

We have said all this repeatedly. Comrades who now hear the same basic idea from Cunliffe should again try to think it through.

If it makes sense to you to give the Smith faction control of the leading committees, then it also makes sense to vote to let them back in to the organisation and, after they are back, it would make sense to help them in their unrelenting fight for control of the organisation. If it does not make sense to give them control of the organisation or to help them in a new round of their two-year long faction fight to gain that control, then it makes no sense at all to vote to let them back into the organisation. For it is a certainty that once back they will resume full factional operation in the old style and continue functioning as a separate organisation which uses the WSL as its field of operation.

In March the NC faced the fact that a split was unavoidable, and if prolonged it could partially wreck the organisation. The NC did not reach that conclusion lightmindedly or hastily, but at the end of a two-year-long effort to salvage the fusion. We reached it when we could see no constructive alternative. The expulsion was a constructive act in the same way that the removal of a diseased and malignant organism is constructive for the body which needs surgery. The value of Cunliffe's document is that he abandons the vapid pretences on which the DCF campaigns for 'unity'. He spells out the real alternative, on the basis of the actual facts, plainly enough. His programme for unity with Smith is:

1. Let Smith back in;
2. Form an unprincipled combination round the Smith group and the DCF to remove the present leadership;
3. Put in a new leadership, the core of which will be Smith, Jones, and the 'worker leadership' system;
4. Split off the present majority.

Politics must decide between these two alternatives. You cannot take sides

on this or that petty detail. To think - as some do - that it would have been better for the WSL if the Smith group had been expelled at a conference, and then three months later to draw the conclusion that you must vote to reinstate them and let them do their worst to the organisation, is both illogical and irresponsible. It is necessary to stick to the basic political issues. Certainly the 'party regime' is one of those issues - I insisted on this before Smith or the DCF raised it - but all the allegations about the 'regime' are part of a frame-up, and it is just not true that the Smith-DCF alliance, if given control, would produce the enlightened regime they promise.

If you take sides according to the real or alleged details or mechanisms of the split, then you will be helping the 'worker leadership' and their auxiliaries in the WSL to realise the first part of the four-part programme above.

WHY THE EXPULSION WAS NECESSARY

The central political fact is that until March 31 there were two organisations within the WSL shell. The progressive breakdown of the 1981 fusion from May 1982 onwards had finally led to that result.

This or that individual breach of discipline is not the essence of the matter. The DCF allegation that there were no charges of individual breaches of discipline is both untrue and irrelevant. Dozens of charges could have been laid against the Smith group and its members. To take the last example before the expulsion, they could have been formally charged with maintaining a secret - and therefore unconstitutional - faction. We could have made the expulsion seem to depend on the single provable charge that at their meeting on March 25 the faction decided to dispense with WSL legality and go underground.

We could have brought formal charges against them about the meeting which they held with the proto-DCF after their own faction meeting on March 25, a meeting which directly violated clause 16(iii) of the constitution: "All faction meetings... must either be strictly internal to the faction, or open to all members of the group".

Several members of the Smith group could have been lapsed on financial grounds. At the time of the expulsion Hotchkiss was facing charges on the Yorkshire area committee that he had spoken against the WSL to non-members. Etc. etc.

But to base ourselves on such questions would have been to distort the basic reality. It was not this or that incident that made coexistence impossible, but the entire situation. We chose instead to pose the issue as clearly and politically as we could. There were two organisations. The Smith group was paralysing the League. They were disruptive. Their response to the March 10 NC resolution proved it. After the April 1983 conference they had been given the most generous minority rights that a minority could have while maintaining any sort of majority rule, and they had not been satisfied. There was not the slightest reason to think things would improve unless the majority gave control to the Smith group.

Their entire posture was that either they got their way or they would kick up such a stink as to make life in the League impossible. They did that, repeatedly. Cunliffe managed to be inadvertently candid about that, too, in his own way. He writes of Smith and Jones: "It is impossible to impose a bureaucratic straitjacket on them". To treat them as ordinary mortals, and when they are in the minority, as a minority, that is to impose a bureaucratic straitjacket.

THE MEANING OF THE VOTE ON JUNE 30

What Cunliffe writes is, finally, important for another reason: it helps us to define clearly and exactly what we will be doing when we discuss the expulsions at conference on June 30.

By stated intentions as to voting, the big majority of the WSL supports the expulsions of Smith's worker-leadership group. The most sanguine serious expen-

tions I have heard from the DCF is that they will get 40 votes. Cunliffe writes about securing "a change of majority control of leading committees" and, by implication, putting a Smith/DCF alliance in control. But their chances of even getting the worker-leadership group back in the WSL are very slight. They know that. So what are they trying to achieve?

The core of the DCF are people committed to leaving the WSL after the conference and helping Smith set up a competing group. In the WSL now there are only two things they can hope to achieve: by way of agitation, scandal-mongering and lies to maximise the number of people who pass from the WSL to the DCF and thence to the Smith group; and, using the same techniques, to maximise the minority vote at conference for the readmission of the Smith group so that afterwards they can claim that they, together with the Smith group, were on March 31 the majority of the WSL and therefore the expulsion was 'undemocratic'.

If they lose by less than 35 votes (the number suspended on March 31 and expelled on April 14), they will make this claim.

In real terms it will be an irrelevant and a false claim, and one with only one consequence - to add spice to the accounts that our enemies will give of the WSL's break with Smith.

False, because the discussion since the expulsion has probably affected the way some comrades^{who} will vote for reinstatement on June 20 see the matter. The vicious campaign of misrepresentation and libel against the NC has undoubtedly had some impact. Some comrades who would have voted for an 'amicable' separation at a conference will, because they do not like the connotations of 'bureaucracy' and 'brutality' involved in the 'expulsion' by the NC, abstain or vote for reinstatement. Some who would be horrified if reinstatement actually happened may cast a 'protest' vote for it with the thought in their minds that reinstatement is extremely unlikely.

If we had had a two-month campaign around an NC motion along the lines of Jagger's March proposal for an agreed 'divorce', then the evidence of the breakdown could have been presented and the worker-leadership faction put on the defensive. There would have been no red herrings about 'bureaucracy', 'breaches of democratic rights' etc.

The problem was that this would have meant turning the organisation inwards for two months in a most destructive way. So the NC chose to act as the constitution empowered it to do and to organise the unavoidable split in the most economical way possible. The reader who thinks that the ructions with the DCF backlash have taken too much time and energy in the last 3 months should try to imagine what it would have been like with the worker-leadership faction still around.

All this means that the discussion and voting at our conference on the expulsions is not the equivalent of a discussion on a separation.

The arithmetic is also essentially irrelevant because it will not get the Smith group back in the organisation. Nor will it exert any 'moral' pressure on the WSL majority.

It is not, however, inconsequential. It will be a pity if the WSL conference makes it possible for our enemies to present things in a bad light.

Whatever you think about the rightness or wrongness of the way the NC handled the unavoidable break with the worker-leadership group, it does not make sense - unless you favour giving Smith control of the WSL and/or having the League wrecked in a newly intensified faction-fight with a restored Smith group - to vote for reinstatement. If you intend to stay in the WSL, don't give your vote to the DCF on June 30. There is little chance that you will vote Smith back into the WSL - and if you do the result will only be a second and more damaging split a few months later. A few additional stray votes or abstentions can take the DCF vote over the figure they need to spice up their account of

the Smith group's expulsion.

Listen to Cunliffe. In item 35 he argues that we are "the sitting duck the WRP were in 1974"; and in item 34 he declares:

"If the expulsions are confirmed, then plainly the expelled members will also be obliged to explain themselves to the workers' movement in building a new grouping". At the NC on March 31 Cunliffe was quite explicit that he personally would be helping the Smith group in their attempt 'to make the WSL's name stink in the labour movement'.

Section D of Cunliffe's document - from item 46 onwards - purports to deal with our "misrepresentations" of the DCF. In fact he scurries away from some of the proposals of the DCF (and of the WLF, which was mainly responsible for IB 92). On other proposals he tries to answer objections by presenting reasonable glosses on them - except that we will be voting not on the glosses but on the original document.

Item 46: THE DCF DON'T WANT 4 CONFERENCES A YEAR

"Of course the DCF does not propose four conferences a year" - only four "national membership meetings". "Only on specially-designated occasions, and with proper advance notice and preparation, would such aggregates take votes on issues".

IB 92 says: "Regular aggregate meetings at area and national level... 3-4 times a year for national aggregates..." There is nothing to indicate that these aggregates would be different from conferences except in being less formal. (In WF before 1972 we called our conferences "aggregates". All the change of name from "aggregate" to "conference" meant was that the organisation had become larger and the event more formal).

In any case, from the point of view of the effects on the organisation now there is no meaningful difference between a conference and national meetings such as Cunliffe proposes in his gloss. Inevitably, in an organisation with the level of disputes we have been having and would have with the WLF back in, every "national membership meeting" would become a "specially designated occasion" with "proper advance notice and preparation" (with a meeting every three months, what would that mean?) Nothing could be more certain.

Whenever any minority on the NC felt unhappy with a decision, it would immediately make the upcoming national meeting "a specially designated occasion". The NC would have no power and no authority to legislate in a binding way for the organisation.

Part of the 'centralist' side of democratic centralism is that the organisation is not a perpetual discussion circle. In some periods - pre-conference discussion - the emphasis is put on discussion. Then a decision is taken, and for the next period the minority accepts it and we focus on constructive work to implement that decision.

This concept can be interpreted over-rigidly, as in the many would-be Trotskyist organisations which permit factions only during pre-conference discussion periods. But the DCF leaves us with practically no centralism at all. There would never be any time - not even a few months - when the basic decisions were taken, minority/majority relations were settled, and we turned whole-heartedly to constructive work. We would continue the regime of summer 1983 to August 1983 - more or less permanent pre-conference session.

National meetings so frequent could not be properly prepared. The attendance would soon fall off (as it did at the third conference in 1983). It would be not democratic but utterly destructive.

Finally, Cunliffe says: "Majority comrades cannot see any purpose in political discussion that does not focus upon and end in a VOTE, a factional line-up". A vote is not necessarily a factional line-up, and it is very instructive that Cunliffe sees the two as synonymous. In the I-CL we had many line-ups and votes, but very few factions.

The difference between the DCF and us on the party is quite well expressed here. No, we don't see must point in aimless, purposeless, endless discussion which does not lead to a conclusion. We are a combat party. We discuss to clarify and to reach conclusions which we then apply or make propaganda for: this practical application of our ideas or propaganda for them is the reason why we are organised as a party. We are not a talking shop. We do not want discussion to go on endlessly purposelessly, or with no purpose except to allow the WLF to maintain a high agitational profile. We do not want the sort of ideological structurelessness that dominated the old WSL.

In fact, with the WLF back in, every "national aggregate" would be a factional scrum - with votes. The picture of "national aggregates" as friendly, harmonious, constructive events where we exchange experiences and discuss without pressure - a picture sometimes used by the DCF - is utterly fantastic. Even as a fantastic notion, however, it reveals something unhealthy about the DCF's conceptions.

The political ideas would remain in a state comparable to nebulous clouds of gas. The status and authority not only of the NC, but also of the annual conference, would be undermined. The aggregates would proceed by "discussion without votes". And how would things be decided? By the worker leadership. They would pick and choose ideas, using the national aggregates as a sort of consultative democracy to tell them which way to trim their sails and as a counterweight against the NC. The apparatus people could pick and choose the items for discussion at the aggregates, rely on the spirit of consensus politics to avoid any embarrassing results, and retain full freedom to go their own way.

Item 50: THE DCF DO NOT "WANT TO IMPOSE A CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHT OF ACCESS TO THE PAPER FOR MINORITY VIEWS"

Like much else, it is not clear in IB 92.

It says that "the historical norms of democratic centralism" do not apply. "The present weekly paper is not a 'party press'... This raises special problems of editorial line and control which are not dealt with under the historical norms of democratic centralism".

It seems to argue that only the conference and NC, not the EC, can establish a WSL position: it says that the issue of the TUC and the NGA, on which the EC did take a position, is an "issue on which the League has no adopted policy".

It says that on such issues - where the EC has decided, but not NC or conference - "The exclusion of 'minority' points of view on the part of League members, or their presentation as oppositional 'discussion' material, is also a complex issue falling outside the historical norms of democratic centralism".

Generally, IB 92 presents itself as arguing for more minority access to the press - in a situation where the only restrictions on such access had been trivial (see IB 114 on Smith and the press).

At the same time they don't want majority access to the press on Afghanistan.

Cunliffe writes: "Insofar as [we have a 'broad' paper] it is reasonable that our own comrades who hold views in opposition to those of the leadership should seek to have their views published for discussion without derogatory and tendentious introductions being gratuitously added. Quite plainly the right to determine what should or should not be published rests in the last analysis with the leading bodies of the League..."

It is good that Cunliffe concedes that what is or is not published rests with the leading bodies of the organisation. But all else is unclear. "Insofar as... the paper carries analysis on issues where there is no established majority/minority League positions, it is reasonable that our own comrades who hold views in opposition to those of the leadership [but I thought we were discussing a situation where there was no position?] should seek to have their views published for discussion without derogatory and tendentious introductions being gratuitously added."

The demand is almost reasonable - but it is camouflage. We will vote on IB 92, not pseudo-reasonable glosses like this.

And what is Cunliffe talking about when he condemns "derogatory and tendentious introductions"? There is only one concrete case where that was

alleged - Smith's article on Grenada. There was a League (EC) position then. The blurb just indicated that it was a discussion article. It was written by me... and Cunliffe!

Item 51: COVERAGE OF AFGHANISTAN

Cunliffe denies that the DCF "opposes publication of the 'majority' line or 'even honest news reports'".

IB 92 says: "To pursue debate on these issues [Afghanistan, and the theory of imperialism] in the public arena of our weekly press... simply exposes our weakest face to the workers' movement..."

Does Cunliffe deny that there is a majority for the 'troops out' line? Does he deny that they opposed even news reports (which inevitably are hostile to the USSR occupation unless after citing the terrible facts they then explain them away or justify them)?

See IB 70 for a detailed account of the Afghanistan dispute.

The resolution on Afghanistan for our conference is not 4 years old, as anybody who reads it will see. The first part is an up-to-date picture of the result of the 4¹/₂-year USSR occupation. What is "four years old" is the assessment of the pre-invasion Afghan revolution and the discussion of the basic principles involved. Nothing new needs to be said there.

Cunliffe's subservience to Smith and Jones is strikingly expressed here when he argues that we should not put material in our press because that is "the Menshevik technique of invoking (bourgeois) 'public opinion' against opponents within the Marxist movement" - implying that the 'troops out' position is a concession to such 'public opinion'. But, Cunliffe, you share our 'troops out' conclusions on Afghanistan! Is this a confession as to why? No: you are just crawling on your belly for the 'worker leadership'.

PART 2A

Before going on to the point-by-point replies to Cunliffe's 50 items, it is worth singling a few out as representative examples.

Item 10: IT IS A 'MONSTROUS FABRICATION' THAT SMITH & JONES REGARDED THEMSELVES AS A DESIGNATED 'WORKER LEADERSHIP'

I have published quite a lot of material on the worker leadership question - including, in IB 89, minutes of an important EC discussion and part of an EC document discussing Smith's and Jones's claims to deference and their notion that for the NC to vote for Polish self-determination against them was 'hi-jacking' the organisation.

This question is central to the whole nexus of questions now being discussed in the League. A serious reply to what I've written would assess the documents and the record of the EC discussions, etc. Cunliffe does not do that. He is like a child short of arguments saying "no I don't" or "yes you do". His sole argument is that Jones denied the description. "Carolyn even at one point admits that Jones emphatically denied ever hearing the term 'worker leadership' used before. Maybe the term was not used, admits Carolyn: but his response is simply 'Never mind' - and more of the same lies".

This is the passage in IB 89 that Cunliffe is referring to: (p.12A)

"At the March 10 NC, Jones, his face showing the utmost sincerity, denied that he had ever heard the expression 'worker leadership' used, let alone habitually used, to describe Smith and himself. Never mind - Smith's comments at the same NC about the importance of 'having a record' left little room for doubt about the substance of the matter."

It then goes on to refer to the Polish self-determination dispute and the evidence of the July/August 1983 EC minutes.

Put more directly, what I said was that Jones was a shameless hypocrite in his denial, and the substantial evidence showed that.

At this stage in the game, for Cunliffe to respond as he does is to admit that he can't deal with the material circulated on the issue.

Item 13: SMITH AND HIS BOOK

This is in the same vein. I have written that Smith is now "a demoralised ex-worker dilettante", "writ(ing) his memoirs". I have referred to him having "left the factory". I did not write or say that "Smith left the factory to become a demoralised ex-worker dilettante and write his memoirs"!

Of course he was victimised - and we splashed it all over our press. We'll have to see what his memoirs are like.

But I can do more than guess about it. I have read a two-part article that Smith wrote in 1979 for Socialist Press in which he ridiculously depicted the degenerate ultra-sectarian SLL of 1969 as central in the successful fight to stop the Labour government's proposed anti-union legislation.

For Smith has a problem. He was until 1966 a CPer, and then until 1974 an SLLer in Cowley. As an SLLer, everything he did ^{politically} was wrong or harmful. As an SLLer selling their paper, he brought into the factory Maoist politics in 1967; rabid denunciation of the anti-Vietnam-war movement as middle-class and diversionary; savage and implicitly British-chauvinist attacks on the Irish Republican movement; lunatic politics about imminent military dictatorship; etc. etc. (It is a very long list).

And the SLL's trade union politics, specifically, were utterly sectarian. Right up until he broke with Healy in late 1974, Smith was a leading figure in the Healyite trade union group, the ATUA. This operated within the unions, but was otherwise as sectarian as the Third Period Stalinist breakaway unions. One of its central slogans was: 'Build the alternative leadership, build the SLL'.

Old WSL comrades have said that the local work in Cowley was more intelligent - that it was out of tune with the SLL/WRP's general trade union policy. This may have been true to an extent. But the local variations cannot cancel out the general policy.

The best period of Smith's life has been in the service of Healyite politics, which he must now see as utterly wrong on almost every point. He is like a CP militant of the late 1930s coming over to Trotskyism and faced with the fact that much of his political life has been wasted or objectively directed against the goals he wanted to serve.

When I say that I sympathise with Smith here, it is not out of either hypocrisy or sentimentality. It is a very painful business. I broke with the SLL 20 years ago this coming November, and it is still painful to me to think of what it has become.

But Smith has other problems. He is devoted to his own myth - and his myth is tied in with the Healyites. He cannot come to a proper political assessment of his experience without putting the activities in which he spent the best years of his life in a very unfavourable light. For anybody to do that, they would have to have a great strength of character and a capacity for objectivity, and a certain detachment from themselves. Smith has none of those.

Smith won't write a useful book on Cowley, in my opinion. But in any case the point is that he chose to write the book, memoirs or whatever you like, instead of working as industrial organiser, and it was a purely personal choice, never put to the committees to decide.

PART 3

Many of Cunliffe's arguments are of the type of assertion and counter-assertion. He reiterates charges, assertions and allegations which have had detailed replies made to them - e.g. that the Smith group were expelled without charges or a hearing, that Smith and Jones never regarded themselves as a 'worker leadership' - without reference to the replies.

But it will serve some purpose if we follow after Cunliffe, refuting him point by point. Cunliffe's document and this one taken together will be a comparatively brief resume of most of the issues, the charges and counter-charges bandied about over the last 3 months.

1. CONSTITUTIONALITY OF THE EXPULSIONS

There is no constitutional requirement of advance warning for suspensions. In fact, however, the worker-leadership were not taken by surprise: they had been agitating for three weeks about their imminent expulsion.

They were charged, as a group, as follows: "We therefore indict the members of the faction for failure to comply with the NC decision and for disruption of the League..." (IB 99).

There was a long discussion on the suspension motion, with Smith, Jones and Piggot speaking for the faction, and Cunliffe, Levy, Parsons, Oliver and Gunther in their support. At the hearing the group was represented by Smith, as their chosen representative.

There was no denial of individual rights. They were an organised faction, with self-chosen representatives on the NC (one of whom was Cunliffe). The NC said it considered that they were lying when they said they had disbanded, and it proceeded accordingly.

It was perfectly reasonable to take the group as a group provided that adequate provision was made for anybody who differentiated. Such provision was made. Any member of the faction who dissociated from their reply to the March 10 NC resolution was exempted from the suspension and expulsion. Any member who dissociated from the collective faction response to the charges could be heard separately. No-one chose to be an individual: they maintained factional solidarity all along.

The demand to be treated as individuals was not based on what was individual to them, but was a collective tactic to filibuster and waste the time of the NC. Nothing individual was relevant to their expulsions. They were expelled for what was collective to them, membership of the worker-leadership group, and they had the worker-leadership speak for them.

The constitution does not speak one way or the other on 'collective expulsions'. But the right to expel an individual plainly also applies to a unified collective with its own leadership, etc. Otherwise the organisation would be helpless against disruptive factions. Moreover, there is WSL precedent. We expelled the Morrow group collectively, and Cunliffe, Parsons, Oliver, Levy and Gunther voted for it. The Morrow group, too, had only one representative for their collective hearing.

2. DEMOCRATIC CENTRALIST NORMS

The organisation upheld democratic-centralist norms by insisting that the Smith group comply with the constitution and the fusion agreement or get out, and when they would not comply, by putting them out. The constitution has not been violated at any point in relation to the expulsion. Cunliffe ignores repeated challenges to spell it out, chapter and verse. He relies on the pretence that the Smith group were not a group but 35 individuals. I refuse to believe that anybody in the organisation sincerely thinks that the worker-leadership faction actually dissolved on March 25. Nobody could be that stupid.

3. THE CONTROL COMMISSION

It is a lie that there was 'obstruction' or 'pressure' brought on the CC not to hear Smith's complaints. The EC tried to insist with Smith on norms of procedure commonplace even in bourgeois justice - such as that those accused should be allowed to hear the charges. Smith refused.

The CC had 5 complaints from Smith. On procedure for approaching the CC it did not rule directly but asked that the NC 'accept the CC's definition of its own scope and operation'. On an alleged statement by Carolan about the paper, it did not find proof that the statement had been made. On the alleged unconstitutionality of having the conference any other time than April, it found against Smith. On procedure for fines, it found in favour of Smith. On lapsings for paper debts, it did not find any unconstitutionality. It said it would investigate further whether debt-collection was being administered impartially, but did not say that it had found any evidence of partiality.

I think that the CC's way of proceeding was out of order in many respects. But that is a matter for another document.

4. THE NC'S AUTHORITY

At issue here is the question of whether or not we are a democratic centralist organisation. Cunliffe's arguments and implications here can only be sustained from a point of view that denies that we are a centralised revolutionary organisation.

The NC is charged with maintaining discipline and with ensuring that the organisation functions, for example in the miners' strike. It has full power of discipline over all members of the organisation without exception. Minorities are obliged by the constitution to submit to the NC - on pain of any appropriate disciplinary measures allowed for in the constitution being taken against them by the NC. The NC has the right and the duty to try and if necessary expel those who break the rules, disrupt the organisation, etc. There is no case of discipline listed in the constitution on which the NC cannot act ^{but} must call a conference.

The NC represents the 'whole membership' between conferences and is charged to be a leadership, exercising its collective political judgment. Whether or not disciplinary action involving "mass expulsions, tantamount to a split" "on political lines" is a matter for a conference is for the NC to decide, according to its constitutional rights and duties.

The NC and the NC alone decides between conferences whether to throw a given issue into a specially convened conference. There is no matter of constitutional rights here but of political judgment.

When a call for a special conference has received the necessary signatures to make it mandatory ^{that} does not override, suspend or neutralise the duty and right of the NC to act as it thinks fit on questions of discipline - though obviously conference will pronounce on what the NC does and may, if it chooses, undo it.

We hold to the view that the NC is elected to be a political leadership of the organisation and that it should behave as a leadership. It has certain rights and responsibilities as a leadership. It has, and should where it chooses exercise, all the powers of a full conference (except changing the constitution).

We reject the idea that agitation by a segment of the membership or a plebiscitary petition has any power to inhibit the NC from exercising its leadership prerogatives when it does not itself think it politically wise to be so inhibited. We think that the procedure of organising a petition to try to inhibit the NC in leading the organisation is utterly repugnant to the spirit of the constitution.

The ignorant, demagogic and populist (but factionally motivated) proposition that by acting as it did the NC acted outside the constitution, is one measure of the political degeneracy of the DCF, and evidence that it is a long way from having the right to call itself 'centralist'.

5. THE JUNE 30/JULY 1 CONFERENCE

The June conference is a regular annual conference, albeit one not exactly under 'normal' circumstances. If Cunliffe thinks that the documents presented by us on tasks and perspectives, on organisation, on international solidarity work, and on Afghanistan are not 'serious', then why didn't he write alternatives or amendments?

Cunliffe tries in advance to downgrade the conference because he knows that he will be a minority there and because most of the DCF - despite their stock-in-trade call for more conferences and 'aggregates' - do not intend to accept or abide by the decisions of the conference.

6. THE RELEVANCE OF THE 1983 CONFERENCES

Nobody says that the expulsion 'implemented' the 1983 conference decisions. We say that we exercise the judgment of the leadership elected in 1983 and that we judged the faction to be disruptive and the prospects for it being other than disruptive hopeless.

A central reason - though not necessarily the only one - why various conference decisions have not been implemented, or have been implemented inadequately, has been the disruptive effect of the worker-leadership faction which, for example, made the leading committees unworkable.

It is pretty sick for Cunliffe, who has always been hostile to the broad-groups tactic, to accuse us of sabotaging it.

It is hardly true that "an amendment from Cunliffe opposing Carolan's 'norm' of 'one-person management' and calling for Branch and area committees ... was carried". 'One-person management' - a notion advocated by WF since 1972 - means individual responsibility, not "unilateral decision-making", as Cunliffe misrepresented it. It is not opposed to or an alternative to committees. We argued against Cunliffe's amendment (see IB 65) because it put the emphasis in the wrong direction, but in terms of strict wording it actually accepted individual responsibility.

7. THE EDITORIAL BOARD

An EB has existed, though it is still far from satisfactory. For nearly 4 months the combined effects of the miners' strike and the efforts to free the organisation of the worker-leadership faction and contain the DCF backlash have disrupted all 'normal' functioning. The departure of the Smith group probably means that the time is ripe when things settle down for a new experiment to get an EB broader than the EC properly established.

It is a lie that Cunliffe ('Harry Sloan') has been banned from writing for the paper since the New Year. He was banned for three weeks before the March 10 NC decided what to do about his walking off the paper and defiance of an NC instruction that he should return. The NC removed Cunliffe from the EC and simultaneously the ban was lifted. No-one else in the organisation has ever been banned from writing, even for three weeks.

8. WAIVING THE CONSTITUTION?

No constitutional rights have been waived. Only in one respect did the NC depart from the letter of the constitution - and it said it was doing so, and why. We decided that because of the miners' strike the conference should be "six weeks from the end of the miners' strike, or within three months, whichever is sooner", rather than in 2 months. We say that such an adjustment in a situation like that created by the miners' strike is within the NC's mandate.

9. THE CHARGE OF DISRUPTION

Disruption is a sufficient charge for a grouping that was actually an uncontrolled independent organisation with its own leadership, membership, finances, literature, distribution network, conferences, and with areas under its control. In any case the expulsion charges were more specific. We accused the Smith group of defying the March 10 NC resolution which detailed a whole series of practices by the faction which must be changed.

The NC has the right to issue ultimatums, and if they are ignored or flouted to take punitive action in response. If those involved in the dispute with the NC then call for a special conference that does not in any way or to any degree other than the NC's political calculation inhibit, hinder, or neutralise the NC's right to act immediately against those who flout its authority.

The Morrow group were expelled after a public breach of discipline. Actually they were expelled because they were agents of the RWL. In fact what happened that made their overdue expulsion possible was that Smith and Jones fell out with the RWL, with whom they had maintained a bloc against us, at the April 1983 TILC conference. The Morrow group should have been expelled when it became plain that they were RWL agents.

Conversely, a number of worker-leadership faction (WLF) members, including Smith, broke discipline by voting against the League on Ireland or abstaining (Smith) at the broad groups conference last October. All of them could have been expelled. There were not even censured or reprimanded, because nobody on our side had then reached the conclusion that a break was inevitable.

Take another example. At the broad groups school in October Smith publicly made the charge that the agenda of the school had been fiddled (by Kinnell, of course). Non-members were present. It is possible to argue that this incident alone merited expulsion: the leader of a former WF 'DCF', Roy Ratcliffe, was expelled for something similar.

If that and many other similar incidents had been charged against Smith, resulting in censures, etc., that would have prepared the organisation for the split. We didn't do it because (a) we neither planned nor wanted a split, and (b) because such a course of action would have made a split certain and maybe speeded it. Instead - until March - we chose to avoid avoidable clashes with the WLF.

Would the barracks-room lawyers of the DCF like to tell us that we were out of order to waive such breaches of discipline, and that we should have applied the letter of the constitution robot-like, whatever the consequences? Logically they should. Logic or principle isn't their strong point, though, is it?

We did not want to expel any of the WLF until a break became politically unavoidable. Then, to focus on this or that incident would have been misleading. But in the months up to expulsion there was never a shortage of 'incidents' meriting discipline.

10. THE 'WORKER LEADERSHIP'

See above, part 2A.

11. MORAL BLACKJACKING

I did not write "orally blackjacked", as Cunliffe quotes me, implying Healyite shouting and bullying. (Though I've seen some of that. Experienced it, too: I made the mistake of going on a short car journey with Smith, Levy, Cunliffe and Jones during the May 1982 NC on the Falklands). I wrote "morally blackjacked".

That means insistently playing the card: "We are poor underprivileged undereducated workers as well as great revolutionary leaders - you are a miser-

able petty bourgeois or bureaucrat", or "an intellectual". Comrades can get a taste of it from the EC minutes reproduced in IB 89.

There are traces of this in Cunliffe's document - in point 14, though not boldly or honestly, he reiterates the demand of Smith and Jones that political decision-making should go at their pace. This is presented as giving the workers in the leadership time.

Normally if someone on the EC wants extra time to think or study, it would be agreed on request - except where the issue was objectively pressing. On the NC postponement is more difficult, because it meets less frequently. But in the 32 months of fusion there was never a case of anything being needlessly rushed through the NC or EC. Where there were disputes about giving more or less time for a discussion, we were always the ones pressing for more time, and Smith and Jones the ones wanting a quick vote. At the February 1983 conference they wanted an immediate vote on the Labour Party issue - on the basis of a document produced by Smith on the day of the conference itself, after their previous document had been withdrawn. They pressed for a quick vote on the issue of 'federalism' in Ireland, whereas we took the initiative in proposing that the discussion be continued, including in public, even after our position had been carried by conference.

The issue that caused the sharpest crisis in this connection was Polish self-determination. It had been discussed at OGs and at a previous NC before the decision was taken, at the NC immediately following the declaration of martial law in Poland. The vote was on the first day of a two-day NC. Jones and Smith could easily have proposed that there be a longer discussion, or even that the matter be reopened after the vote. They did not.

In practice the seemingly modest request, "give us workers time" meant - "give us the power to set the pace and the right to determine when and if something will be decided". It was a demand for a mode of operation like that of the old WSL - where positions on issues like Ireland and the economic crisis could be and were changed, but only when and as the 'worker leadership' decided to concede a particular point.

Smith had plenty of 'time' after he was sacked in late 1982 - but it made no difference. The problem was elsewhere.

In practice the political life of the committees became intolerably sluggish and unproductive. On the Labour Party we tried to start a discussion in the EC in September 1982. Smith and Jones stalled for weeks, then launched a campaign against use as 'liquidationist'... and only produced a position of their own months later. On international work we tried to get a discussion immediately after the April 1983 TILC meeting. Smith and Jones stalled until November 1983, and even then, though they were loud in denouncing us as 'sectarian', they had no alternative of their own.

In the meantime much of the life of the committees was taken up by censure motions, grievance mongering, etc.

I witnessed attempted moral blackjacking against ex-I-CL people in the EC - against Kinnell, for example. A typical scene: at the 1982 summer school a couple of Cowley workers said to Smith that they could not understand something. At the subsequent EC, Smith - with a venom quite absent from the original complaint - upbraided Kinnell, saying, "Martin has no interest in talking to workers". When that was said Kinnell had been working all-out full-time at subsistence wages for about 8 years and had been a revolutionary 13 years. He could plausibly have claimed to have recruited and educated more workers than Smith.

Similar tactics - and more viciously - were tried against Khan. By the time of the fusion Khan was comparatively affluent - as well off as the average skilled worker, say. She became the target of disgusting petty bourgeois envy from some people like Morrow who were themselves far better off than she was. But she had

been a revolutionary for 18 years at the time of the fusion, and had spent a great many of those years in extreme poverty doing full-time revolutionary work. Both Kinnell and Khan were morally much better qualified than Smith, the professional star worker. But still the 'class struggle in the WSL' went on, as part of the drive of the 'worker leadership' to assert itself.

They tried it with me, too - classifying me as "an intellectual" and objecting that there was something out of order and unfair in me being able to spend more time writing articles than Smith or Jones could spend. Smith and Jones were to be the measure of all things, and nobody should spend more time writing or researching articles for the press than Smith and Jones, working five days a week at Cowley, could spend. (If you think I exaggerate, see the document on Poland reproduced in part in IB 89).

The only full-timers permissible were technicians and literary servants of the worker leadership, like Cunliffe - people who would write what they were told, who prided themselves on 'fighting for a system where comrades who have ideas do not dominate the organisation' (IB 89, p.19), and who jumped into line when told to. Above all, people trained and conditioned as Cunliffe is to see themselves and their place in the leadership as mere literary or technical servants of the worker leadership.

With me it was counterproductive. I don't have a problem with my class identity. So Smith's and Jones's "we're the worker leadership" carry-on led me to classify them politically as petty bourgeois workerists.

But the "we are workers - you are petty bourgeois" gambit is a powerful weapon. Petty bourgeois members do feel guilt and uncertainty, and many of them do have a problem with their class identity. The moral blackjacking does work. A number of petty-bourgeois followers or semi-followers know or half-know that Smith is ignorant and subjective. Cunliffe himself used to amuse us in the newspaper office with tales about Smith's vanity. Some of them will admit that Smith does not know much, or even that much of the trouble in the organisation came from Smith and Jones attempting to insist on laying down the line on issues they know very little about.

Why do they continue deferential? The answer is that these petty bourgeois might admit under pressure that Smith and Jones are pretty miserable specimens, but they believe them to be miserable specimens of a higher breed.

On the EC Cunliffe himself repeatedly jumped into line as if under an inner compulsion (see IB 95). Which takes us to a deeper level: the worker leadership's petty bourgeois followers are where they are, and Cunliffe is what he is, as a result of a process over years of psychological selection. A very large number of 'petty bourgeois intellectuals' have passed through the Smith group over the last decade. It is no accident that Cunliffe alone remains, and that the one who remains lies and twists as Cunliffe has been proven to lie and twist. You cannot be a literary servant of the 'worker leadership' and maintain self-respect, integrity, or the elementary norms of Trotskyist politics.

But for now we have gone deep enough. All in all, I think Cunliffe is wise not to reply to the account of his behaviour in IB 95.

12. THE OLD WSL

Cunliffe writes easily and casually, and he must have lots of spare time. Why doesn't he reply to my analysis of the old WSL? Why doesn't he show what is wrong with it?

13. SMITH SINCE HIS SACKING

See above, part 2A.

14. THE DEMAND FOR DEFERENCE

See above, point 11.

15. OXFORD'S FEDERALISM

The reply that there was activity in Oxford is irrelevant to the charge. Some examples. In February Oxford helped organised a ^{big} public meeting on Ireland. They did not put the WSL's position at the meeting. We held two organisers' meetings, in March and October. Oxford boycotted the March meeting completely and the October one partially. The main thing we discovered from the October meeting was that in Oxford they were campaigning for a boycott of the EEC elections, though they cannot seriously have believed that this was consistent with the League's politics.

The fact that there are pro-majority branches which run badly is also irrelevant. Slackness in a weak branch is different from stonewall non-cooperation in the second 'centre' of the organisation.

Much has been made of the alleged fact that the WLF proposed the September 17 conference. In fact they didn't. The general idea of the conference was proposed by Kinnell as part of an overall package of activity. The contribution of the WLF was to argue that it should be in September rather than later in the year as Kinnell proposed.

Having made that contribution, Smith, the industrial organiser, then refused to be mobilised to do more than minimal local work for the conference.

16. SMITH AS INDUSTRIAL ORGANISER

Smith did formally take on full responsibility as Industrial Organiser. The only qualification was "Levy and Hill also to work on this in the short term" (see IB 62). The qualification was made not because of the Cowley work - that was only brought in later - but because of Smith's book.

The charge is not that Smith as an individual played no role in the NGA dispute - but that he never functioned as industrial organiser. The reply that Smith and Cunliffe make to this charge is very revealing, and relevant to the charge of federalism (item 15): they say he did work round Cowley, as he had been doing for 24 years, and that was enough!

"Carolan is hostile to BL work". Carolan is hostile to Oxford federalism and to the notion that the political world revolved around Cowley. Of course the BL work is important - or rather it would be important if it were part of the work of building a Trotskyist organisation. It isn't and perhaps never has been (see IB 89). It is a tragedy for the organisation that the Cowley workers have been walled off from us by Oxford federalism, by Smith's and Jones's poison, and by their own lack of political development. But it is not a new tragedy: it has been like that all the way through the fusion.

17. THE WLF AND THE MARCH 10 RESOLUTION

Reasonable or unreasonable the WLF had no option but to accept the NC decision: it was for the NC to decide what was reasonable. The resolution did not ask them to accept its analysis: it demanded that they accept its practical conclusions. The WLF replied to the resolution by holding a national conference, deciding on their campaign strategy and tactics for the next period, pretending to dissolve the faction, and using their numbers to insist that the organisation turn inwards for the first 2 months of the miners' strike to discuss their grievances.

Kinnell said that a bland statement by the WLF that "we will continue to abide by the constitution" would be taken not as a satisfactory reply but as a declaration that they were going to continue in the manner that the NC had condemned.

They had the option of actually complying with the NC demands, and they chose not to. They could have complied while issuing a statement that they had not been 'beating their wife' in the first place - and if they had actually

complied we would have had no grounds, or motive, to throw them out.

They could have made an effort to regularise their financial situation, instead of stonewalling and complaining of 'harassment'. They could have arranged meetings to enable discussion between the EC and the Oxford branches on the Oxford work. They could have started working constructively on the leading committees - and by their own declarations they were not doing that: in February 1983 Smith had declared that he would no longer participate in discussions on the EC, but only make prepared statements of position, in April 1983 and again in August 1983 he had declared that he was unwilling to accept responsibility for anything the EC did, whether he had objected to it on the EC or not* - or withdrawn from those committees. They could have halted their campaign of grievances - without having to say they were wrong on any of their previous grievances - and taken up the proposals we had made for organised discussions on basic theoretical/political issues such as imperialism.

They could have. They chose not to.

18. PIGGOT AND THE EC

This is one of the most illuminating episodes of the early fusion, and proof of the Oxford federalism (item 15).

Why, a couple of months into the fusion, did I propose Piggot for the EC even though that broke parity and gave the old WSL a majority on the EC? Because I wanted to bring all the authoritative leaders of the old WSL onto the EC so that we would have have a strong EC that could hold the organisation together during the crucial transition period.

Smith and Jones acted on the EC as shop stewards for Oxford (on Ireland, for example). I formed the impression that they were always looking over their shoulders to see what Piggot thought. I tested it out by proposing to bring him onto the committee and they jumped at the chance.

It is a straight lie that the old WSL EC members never endorsed it: if they had opposed it I would have had no motive to press it.

It was Jones who raised the proposal on behalf of the EC at the NC, which voted Piggot onto the EC (see IB 3). (Admittedly I had to prod Jones into doing what the EC had decided it wanted down at the NC. Under pressure from Oxford he was backing away from it. But he did finally raise it and propose Piggot for the EC.)

The other Oxford NC members were unhappy to the point of revolt. What business, they wanted to know, did the NC have in putting on someone from Oxford other than the choice of the Oxford area committee?

The motivating force was that Todd saw herself as far more entitled to be on the EC than Piggot and, being very forceful, created a great stink about it. She had the added motive that Khan, whom she saw as her arch-rival, was on the EC. After the NC had voted Piggot onto the EC, despite the federalist position of Oxford, a scene of uproar such as you sometimes see outside pubs on a Saturday night occurred at Baker Street tube station. Todd, outraged and in tears, made "a public scene" with Smith and Jones, crying and shouting at them. The upshot was that the Oxford area committee had its way and Piggot never took his place on the EC. We deferred to Smith and Jones on the matter, with much heartsearching, for the whole business was outrageous and symptomatic.

Later events show that my proposal (I consulted no-one else) was extremely stupid. I suggest also that the episode shows that the I-CL element were not at all factional. In the same way we gave them a majority on the OC: Kinnell (again without consulting anyone beforehand) suggested adding Levy to it so as to have all the organisers on the committee, irrespective of the fusion parity agreement. We were not thinking in terms of votes but were still confident that reason would be the regulator of what the committees decided.

* In the concrete case each time Smith had not objected on the EC. In April it was the Morrow group expulsion, in August CND. His reason for abstaining on the Morrow expulsion, and voting to censure the EC on CND, was stated in each case as general non-confidence in the EC majority.

The refusal of the WLF to let Piggot take the place on the EC which the NC voted to give him does not show that they were non-factional. Todd was the most rabidly factional person in the organisation all the time she was in it. She was also one of the most subjective and unashamed practitioners of "me-politics". She could not control her chagrin and resentment long enough to allow her faction to take the extra place on the EC.

The old WSL core lacked the political and personal cohesion necessary to allow them to take the factional advantage which we so stupidly offered to them. Todd was ultra-factional but it was more important to her and those she influenced on the Oxford area committee that she should be on the EC than that there should be an old WSL majority on it.

She had the same blind 'spoilers' approach to the women's work - which is why none of us were willing to accommodate her desire to be on the EC. (It was never actually proposed).

As for Cunliffe's comments:

"Undemocratic" for the NC to add one of its members to the EC? Who should decide who goes on the EC, then? I suppose it would be undemocratic - if the League were formally a federation and a representative of Oxford were being chosen.

An "alarming precedent"? For what?

"Against the wishes of the old WSL comrades?" An overwhelming majority of the NC, including Smith, Jones and probably Levy, voted for it (see IB 3). I can't recall how Cunliffe voted, but only Todd and Parsons spoke against.

19. 'SMASH THE PABLOITES'

The reader can judge how sincerely Cunliffe means this by his appeal to Jagger to come forward as a witness to the truth of what he says.

Jagger is on holiday right now and won't be at the conference. But Jagger was at the April 14 NC and he spoke in qualified support of what I had said on this point. He had not heard anyone say they were going to 'smash the Pabloite leadership of the I-CL'. But he told the story of Smith's conclusions from a meeting with some Birmingham carworkers (attended also by Kinnell and Carolan) during the struggle against the sacking of the Lonrbridge 8 in December 1980.

Smith was cock-a-hoop about the prospects for fusion because, he reported, the I-CL carworkers (Whettling, for example) seemed to look to him for a lead rather than to Kinnell and me. We would be a pushover. (By contrast, Kinnell and I came away with a favourable impression of Smith which we used to convince people about the fusion: we were agreeably surprised to find Smith being sufficiently free of sectarianism to support an appeal to Moss Evans and to discuss rifts within the T&G bureaucracy intelligently - an altogether better approach than the sterile reflex denunciation which filled Socialist Press).

Obviously there was some goodwill: how much, in whose heads, is difficult to say. But the old WSL prepared for fusion by hardening up its NC against us. For example they kicked Mason off just before fusion, because he was deemed too soft on the I-CL. It does not say a great deal for the general level of goodwill that Booth and Parsons - longstanding prominent leading figures in the old WSL - survived the attempted purge on their NC.

Morrow was hardly "only one comrade". He led a current representing perhaps a third or a quarter of the old WSL. When Traven withdrew from the old WSL EC just before fusion, it was the same Morrow who was put in his place.

Cunliffe lies about himself too. He opposed the fusion. Advocacy of this or that harder approach by him was aimed to sabotage fusion.

Of course Smith and Jones fought the opponents of fusion. Some aspects of their fight merit respect. But that does not resolve the question.

20. THE FALKLANDS/MALVINAS DEBATE

In my view Smith and Jones did not argue as Marxists during the Falklands/Malvinas debate. Obviously that's a matter of judgment.

But for sure they shifted around all the time - arriving at their final position nearly 3 months after the war ended, and then putting it to a Special Conference held in September 1982 as what we should have been saying during the war.

They put to that conference a theory of imperialism as being dependent for its domination on a worldwide network of enclaves, the Falklands being one of these. They cited three other examples in the first draft of their resolution - Gibraltar, Guantanamo, and the Panama Canal. We pointed out that not one of those fitted their description of their "enclaves" (IB 18, p.6). They then removed all three examples but kept the theory without a single illustration.

Worse than that. Smith and Jones put out a document (IB 7) written by a non-member who collaborated with the organisation. (By our agreement: there was nothing under hand in it). This became their basic position, though it too was modified under pressure.

It contained the notion that our position should be determined by "the class camp into which Argentina fits in a war against imperialism", and that: "Whatever the implications of that for the Argentinian or British proletariat, we have to base our position on the implications for the international struggle against imperialism first".

It was rather the same process as Smith's relations with the Lambertists Blick and Jenkins during his fight with Healy. Smith put out in his own name documents largely written by the Lambertists (they are the main part of the 'Battle for Trotskyism').

Smith and Jones are "not Marxists" in the first place in the same sense that the average raw recruit is "not a Marxist". Except that they are not raw recruits, and they indulge in prestige politics which leads them to rely on collaborators like the author of IB 7 or the authors of the 'Battle for Trotskyism'. They embrace ideas they half-understand, and then defend them while trying to modify them under pressure of criticism.

The other striking feature of the Falklands/Malvinas debate was that all the WLF, and Cunliffe, followed Smith and Jones along the twists and turns of their changing position as a body. They were all defeatists-on-both-sides for the first half of the war. They all changed their line at the beginning of May. They all cited "changes in the situation" as their reason for changing then. They all soon decided that there had been no decisive "change in the situation" in early May, and that defeatism-on-both-sides had been wrong from the start. They all then swung behind IB7. They all adopted the "enclaves" theory just before the September 1982 conference. And so on.

They executed every zig-zag in perfect formation. The obvious explanation is that the rest of the WLF blindly followed Smith and Jones. But it was probably not as simple of that. There seems to have been a sort of sticky 'moving consensus'.

21. THE MINORITY AND THE PAPER

They "were less likely to be asked by Kinnell or Carolan to contribute to the paper..." But, Cunliffe, you were a joint editor of the paper until 6 months ago! Here is a man who plainly thinks himself invisible, weightless and counting for nothing.

In fact one of the stages in the breakdown of the fusion - it came in early 1983 - was when Kinnell, trying to accommodate Smith's criticisms of lack of industrial orientation, repeatedly (and in the most friendly way possible) asked Smith to write on specific industrial and trade union topics - and got blank non-cooperation.

Which articles were drastically altered or cut? Smith's and Jones's were not cut. In the article on Smith and the press in IB 114 (p.2) I listed all the

articles or letters of the WLF not published. Reply to it, Cunliffe, or shut up.

22. SMITH AND CRITICISM

Smith objected to having to defend his ideas - such as on the Cowley witch-hunt and on the alleged causal links between the Falklands war and the invasion of Grenada.

Which "provocative and misleading introductions" did they object to, Cunliffe? I know of only one - the little blurb introducing Smith's article on Grenada and the Falklands. Who wrote it? You did, together with me. What was printed was a commonly agreed, jointly written introduction!

It is not true that the guest non-member contributors were allowed to go unchallenged: aside from specific replies, the entire paper, page after page and week in and week out, is a challenge and a refutation to them.

This is reminiscent of the stupid slander that Morrow and others outside the League spread during the Falklands war. An MP in an interview advocated economic instead of military sanctions. Capitulators, they all screamed. The idea of economic sanctions was repudiated on the front page of the same issue!

In general we try to coexist diplomatically with people who by their presence can give the paper a broader audience. We answer them specifically when necessary, though the general coverage in the paper all the time. The organisation does not - and should not - coexist diplomatically with its own minority who challenge the League line in the public press. We do keep tighter political book-keeping among ourselves than between ourselves and this or that reformist dignitary who will work with us.

"In general the minority objected to the practice of conducting in public the kinds of debate that should properly be staged first internally". Not quite. Repeatedly you initiated such discussions. The Irish federalism discussion was initiated by Jones with a letter to the paper libelling the organisation and the paper. Last autumn Smith came away from the conference where he had voted to limit discussion in the public press and immediately wrote a provocative factional try-on for the press about the Cowley witch-hunt. He demanded public discussion on Grenada and the Falklands, and said that if we did not agree he would raise a stink in the broad groups AGM. Smith demanded two middle-page spreads to put his minority line on the NGAdispute.

What the WLF always objected to was being replied to. It was at the reply stage that it became intolerable and should have been put in the IB etc. etc.

23. CYNICAL JIBES

There was an incident where some drunken comrades from Wallasey sang a silly song. That is very unfortunate. But it has as much to do with their sense of humour as factionalism. They sang a similar sort of song when one of the other Merseyside comrades - a majority supporter - got 'mugged'.

The "young comrade" (he must be 30) in Stoke is a former I-CL member who has rejoined the new WSL because it has finally found the energy to sort out the WLF. Far from ridiculing the organisation, he is intensely serious. My guess is that there are quite a few others who will rejoin the organisation, or join the organisation after being on the periphery for a while, now that we have begun to put things in order.

As for jibes against the organisation by the WLF and DCF - read their documents!

24. THE EX-I-CL AS A "TIGHT-KNIT GROUP"

One of the earliest mini-crises of the fusion concerned a letter I wrote to the paper in reply to a piece of pointless sectarian jee-ring that Cunliffe put in it. This upset the old WSL and Morrow moved a vote of censure on me for it. It was one of the earliest 'get Carolan' episodes. Hill voted for the censure.

"A tight-knit faction... akin to a Masonic lodge"? The urge to verbal

extremism repeatedly spoils Cunliffe's efforts, I fear.

It is a lie that Khan was not criticised. It is a lie that I was not accountable to leading bodies. (It is true that I would not be 'accountable' to the worker leadership and let them tell me what to write or assume the role of a literary hack like Cunliffe).

Clandestine NC faction meetings? A meeting of members of the NC majority on the Falklands question took place at the July 1982 summer school. Certainly most of those there were ex-I-CL, though as I recall (there are no minutes to check) Parsons was also there for part of the meeting.

It took place immediately before a full NC meeting to which five of us (myself, Hill, Kinnell, Whettling, Wolf) went with a declaration.

A meeting of the NC majority determined to clear out the Smith faction took place on March 30 almost two years later. This is obviously a tight-knit faction!

Smith also refers to the 1982 summer school affair somewhere. He says the organisation came close to a split there. I think it would be more true to say that the organisation did split and fall apart at that conference - and then we put it together again.

For most of the early part of the week very few ex-I-CLers were there, and those of us who were there were very much in the minority. There was a full-scale raiding intervention by the RWL with perhaps a dozen comrades there. They operated tight factional discipline, meeting every morning to assign workshops and so on. (We heard all about it from the dissident US comrade). There was also a sizeable number of people from other international groups there. All of them were sectarian and hyped up on the Falklands war. The RWL and the Italian LOR, at least, were out to maximise the breach in the WSL, and the RWL to recruit supporters.

It was like having half a dozen pseudo-spartacist groups roaming around the summer school. It made it impossible to hold rational discussions about anything. Time after time discussions in the workshops were reduced to the crudest sectarian illiteracies. For example, in a workshop on Ireland, a Spanish sectarian with little English read out some of an Internal Bulletin piece by Jo Q, attributing it to me. Some comrades complained that the atmosphere was intimidating.

We were in a minority, and they could harass us, dominate discussion and so on. Any nuance of an idea beyond the fourth letter of the political alphabet was subject to denunciation. The reader will get the general atmosphere if s/he imagines trying to hold a reasonable small meeting with half a dozen sectarian groups intervening - and conducting themselves with the open hostility of hardened political opponents.

In addition Kinnell was tied up running the school and I had to look after a four year old child.

Smith, Jones, and Johnson, notably, joined in the sectarian rampage against us. Smith went as far as backing up the RWL in one workshop where they implied that I was a racist. For the TILC meeting immediately before the school (which was also attended by various observers) the EC had given the then minority on the Falklands question the right to put their own position politically, non-factionally, and objectively. Jones and Johnson made vicious factional speeches against the WSL (for which in my view they could have been expelled). Smith was more cautious but also joined in the denunciations. (You can get a fair idea of it from the minutes in IB 13).

The same thing happened in the workshops. Smith and Jones joined in with the sectarians, denouncing, misrepresenting. They gave me the strong impression - Jones especially - of people out for revenge and feeling that they now had the whip hand.

It is not without interest now that Parsons resigned briefly from the League over the behaviour of the RWL and ^{Oliver} said then that he thought a split was necessary.

necessary.

That was a watershed. The triumphant sectarianism of Smith and Jones, on full display in the first part of the week, left those of us there in no doubt about what life would be like if they ever got the whip hand in the organisation. To speak of myself, the experience made me face up to the fact which I had been shying away from for months, that we had a full-scale fight on our hands if the organisation was to survive as a Marxist organisation.

The decision to call the NC majority together was a response to that situation. Our starting point was the belief that the organisation had broken down as an organisation. Smith says somewhere that the NC members were 'summoned' to the school. No, they weren't. They were due to arrive anyway.

The caucus meeting was no great success. Only five of those there agreed on the statement - documenting the events at the school and demanding that Smith and Jones act as League members - and the cohesion of the caucus did not hold in the full NC meeting.

Some comrades had not had the full experience of the school so far. The NC members were not aware of the disputes on the EC for the previous 9 months. Although politically more homogeneous, as an organised factional formation the I-CL element was always far less cohesive than the old WSL element. There was no tradition of designated leaders being followed: on each issue leadership would have to be fought for and won through political arguments.

There was a strong old-I-CL tradition of individuals priding themselves on their independence and acting accordingly. Above all, the old WSL leaders had long been systematically slandering the ex-I-CL leadership (as Levy put it at the OC in April 1983: "character assassination which is now endemic - which I regard as a scandal, especially the way it has been fostered by other leading comrades"). In contrast we had never so much as criticised Smith and Jones until the Falklands dispute, and then restrainedly at first (read the IBs). Smith had a very high standing in the organisation then - and until he destroyed his standing in the eyes of almost all but his own hard-core loyalists during the rest of the Falklands debate and the Labour Party debate.

But the protest achieved its immediate objective. We got the WSL back together again. Smith and Jones behaved themselves for the rest of the school, acting as members of the WSL, helping to ensure order. For example, Smith came along with me to a debate with the RWL on my articles on socialism and democracy.

After subsiding for some days, the rampant sectarianism of the week re-emerged and climaxed on Saturday in a rowdy demonstration by the international groups and the future Morrowites under the influence of the RWL during the WSL debate on the Falklands. They were protesting against the EC decision that the fraternal groups could only make one contribution each to the discussion. Finally they walked out, including some of the future Morrowites. (We could not discipline the Morrowites for this because of Smith and Jones). The RWL members were on formal discipline, instructed on pain of expulsion to walk out.

But that did not teach Smith, or Jones, or Cunliffe, anything.

The final bizarre episode - I'll finish the story - took place immediately after the debate. We had an EC meeting, all 12 of us as I recall, in a small bedroom. Smith launched an immediate attack - on us. The ructions at the meeting and the walkout were our fault, he said! Moreover, we had planned it. When we proposed to the EC limiting the time given to the international comrades, we knew what would happen. (Though the decision was unanimous).

Levy then took up Smith's idea that we had planned it all, and, after his fashion, went completely over the top. He made a rambling speech absurdly trying to work out the details and the roles in our supposed plot to wreck TILC. Sitting in that small hot crowded little room, I remember the hairs stirring on the back of my neck as Levy was speaking about the details of the 'plot'.

But Smith's alliance with the RWL against us had survived. It would

survive for 9 more months during which the RWL consolidated its faction around Morrow. (At the EC of October 3 1982, for example, Smith indignantly defended Leland of the RWL after others, including Cunliffe and Levy, had objected to Leland's free-wheeling factional trip round the WSL after our September 1982 conference). It ended only when the RWL felt strong enough to spurn Smith.

At the TILC meeting of April 1983 Smith and Jones walked out in a huff because the RWL and their allies put down a motion calling on them to declare a faction and ally with the Morrow faction against us. We thought that was, despite everything, encouraging. Kinnell and I stayed to wind up our business in TILC.

The same evening Smith and Jones declared their faction. I've never been clear on what happened. At the time I thought the main motive was to stop some people in Oxford jumping over Smith's head to join Morrow. Probably that was part of it. But Cunliffe - who was well placed to know - gave me the following account of it.

It had been agreed between Smith and Jones and the RWL that they would form a faction. Throughout the TILC meeting, until they walked out, Smith and Jones covered for the RWL. They gave us an ultimatum to stop us confronting the sectarians, even after the LOR/RWL had said in so many words that their goal was to split the WSL. They even provoked Cunliffe to walk out with this attitude. So the idea of such an agreement is by no means absurd.

What went wrong? The sectarians decided to teach Smith a lesson and to show themselves as having the whip hand by putting Smith in a position of seeming to do their bidding - or TILC's bidding. Thus, perhaps, the startled outrage which led Smith and Jones to rush out of the room for a caucus when they saw the resolution and then to come back and announce that they were leaving and repudiated the RWL as "like Sparts".

Smith and Jones, incidentally, made not even a gesture at consulting Kinnell and me on their response to the RWL/LOR call. The WLF was a 'party within a party' in relation to international work from at least summer 1982 - and over the following two years their alienation from the WSL spread and consolidated.

25. THE 'WORKER LEADERSHIP'

Cunliffe's item is in no way a reply to the material published about the 'worker leadership' (IBs 88, 89, 101). No-one ever said that Smith and Jones were overweening or domineering political leaders: we say the opposite. But they claimed the right to be deferred to, to be the base-line of reference politically. And sometimes, by picking and choosing among alternative positions within the organisation or within 'world Trotskyism', and working towards a muddy consensus, they claimed the right to determine the line of the League in the last resort.

Cunliffe gives the game away when he writes: "... none of us had seen ourselves or operated as self-sufficient individuals". No - you had a sticky collective in which there was a division of labour between the worker leadership and the literary servant, where positions were never worked out logically, but a muddy, usually incoherent, consensus was developed, trading bit for bit, idea for idea. That was the system within which the worker leadership could function.

26. POLITICS AND THE CONSTITUTION

Democratic centralism is part of our politics. It has not been violated: it is being defended by expelling the WLF and putting an end to the federal relation of Oxford with the rest of the organisation - by putting the organisation in a shape where it can do its job of fighting for clear ideas.

"You cannot defend the programme by destroying the fabric of the party" - as a general idea this means that the fight for the programme is subordinate to a 'fabric' which can never be violated. If Cunliffe takes this seriously he condemns the entire history of Trotskyism, right from the break with the Comintern.

Comintern.

If the NC had acted outside the constitution to put an end to the impossible situation that existed before March 31, it would be secondary to the basic question - was it right or wrong? necessary or unnecessary? But in fact nothing was done or is being done outside the constitution.

The scoffing at the idea that the defence of our ideas is worth the lives of everyone in the organisation is part of the philistine degeneracy of the DCF. So is the notion that what was wrong with the 'Chilean section' of TILC was that they fought too hard for ideas. What was wrong with them was that the ideas were sectarian and no good.

27. SMITH AND JONES 'NOT MARXISTS'

See IB 115, pages 1/6 and 5/3.

28. OTHER TROTSKYISTS

That Cunliffe touch again. It is a lie to say that we hold that "no tendency anywhere in the world has anything to offer..." (emphasis his). We arranged discussions with Lutte Ouvriere soon after the fusion in the hope of exposing the old WSL comrades to what that tendency "has to offer". We were actually before the Falklands dispute more positive towards the FIT than Smith, Jones and Cunliffe. We urged a positive attitude to the RWP Sri Lanka, Etc. What we object to is the complacent philistine attitude which, without taking up specific arguments, says that the Mandelites, the Morenists, the Lambertists etc can't really be that bad after all....

29. INTERNATIONAL WORK

Yes, the international work was completely under the direction of the worker leadership and Cunliffe. Look what a marvellous job they made of it. Think what it tells us about their ideas.

After April 1983 Smith, Jones and Cunliffe systematically stalled on the question of international work. Cunliffe, who was supposed to spend half his time on the work, did nothing except to accept an invitation to visit the US, expenses paid, and (on Kinnell's urging) to write a document on the RWL. What has been done since then has been done by us.

When the DCF urges 'more international work', there is a deception involved. More of what sort of work? More letters, visits, publications, bulletins, etc? Certainly. But it was Cunliffe who resigned as international secretary last November and deprived us of resources for such work.

The "more international work" Cunliffe himself wants is to go for fusion with the USFI (in practice it would be liquidation into the Mandel current under the guise of 'tactics'). Do the rest of the DCF agree? If not, isn't their campaign for "more international work" an unprincipled combination?

The Australian comrades joined the Castroite group the better to fight for their ideas. The move was discussed with and agreed by Smith, Jones and Cunliffe.

30. THE I-CL'S INTENTIONS ON FUSION

One of the curious things about Cunliffe's document is that it is written from the viewpoint of those in the old WSL who opposed fusion. It is very ironic that this comes out in a document which half-pretends to be for unity. In fact Cunliffe looks back at fusion with the eyes of an opponent who believes he was right from day 1.

The I-CL planned "factional 'entry' and disruptive tactics"? We have published the minutes of the decisive I-CL NC discussion of December 1980. (IB112). They contain our assessment. The minutes of the fusion discussions were also published: they show plainly that we criticised the old WSL frankly and candidly.

31. OUR CHARACTERISATION OF THE OLD WSL

We consistently regarded the old WSL as modified and partly reformed Healyites. In 1980-1 we thought they were moving away from sectarianism, and in the fusion discussions seemed to make decisive shifts towards Marxist politics.

On everything except the international work and partly women's work the fusion took place essentially on the basis of the politics of the I-CL and was a continuation of the work we had been doing. That we sought the fusion to 'enter and destroy an opponent group' is paranoid nonsense.

True, there isn't much left of that old 'opponent group'. But it wasn't a decisive opponent group, it was falling apart anyway, and the idea that we would have chosen to spend years seeing it off is certifiable.

If this is what Cunliffe tried to write into the DCF platform, the DCF conference was right to reject it.

32. US AS SPLITTERS

We have had more 'fusions' - of Trotskyist groups and on the level of broader unity - than any other group whose history I am familiar with.

Splits are the small change, the commonest coin on the 'Trotskyist' left. By my counting the Smith tendency has had seven splits since 1975, when it itself split from the WRP.

This particular split is unfortunate, and the failure of the fusion is tragic. But, relative to the situation we had before March 31, the gains massively outweigh the losses.

Neither of the two groups had 130 members at fusion. The I-CL had 104. The old WSL had about 128, but about 28 of those never really became members of the new WSL. The organisation now is about 25% bigger than the I-CL in July 1981.

33. NO MORE FUSIONS?

Cunliffe never believed in the fusion in the first place. He declared it dead in January this year. It's a mystery to me how he can sound like someone's depressed and dejected ex-lover forever renouncing sex and wishfully projecting that renunciation onto his former friend. The urge is to stifle and strangle, like Othello with his justification for murder - "lest she betray more men". Psychologically this is the strongest note in Cunliffe's discordant document. I don't understand it or where it comes from.

But he is partly right: there are no obvious immediate fusions on the horizon for us. Right now the job is to build the organisation and repair the ravages caused by the WLF. That way we will be better able to take new opportunities for fusions and unifications when they come along, on the Trotskyist level or the broader level.

Cunliffe's and Smith's warnings here should be given as much weight as their achievements in creating unity warrant. The failure of the 1981 fusion is at least equally their failure. What other unifications have they ever managed?

And - more interesting - seeing that they obviously believe that political life is impossible for more than a very short time without a fusion with someone or other - who do Cunliffe and Smith see as a prospect for fusion with their prospective group? (See item 58).

34. OUR PROSPECTS FOR RECRUITMENT

Only the hostile or malicious will fail to understand the simple idea that we would not go on with two groups in the WSL locked in irresolvable gang-warfare. Only the DCF will deny that the WLF was a distinct group, and most of them not sincerely. There will be no problem in explaining why a divorce was necessary and why, when the WLF refused proposals for an 'amicable' divorce, we had to expel them.

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I would guess the reaction of many people in the broader Left will be like that of one LP leftist in London who said to Kinnell: 'Yes, but why did you fuse with these people?'

Besides, this is not just speculation. Obviously after July 1 the WLF/DCF will make more of a noise, and there may be some articles in Socialist Action, etc. But much of the left already knows about the expulsion of the WLF. I haven't heard of any great outrage or shock. We have recruited a lot of people in the three months since March 31.

In general it will be a lot easier to convince both the non-malicious left and new comrades than to convince some of 'my oldest comrades' - comrades like Oliver and Armstrong and Gunther who seem unable to relate to the actual issues. Utterly confused 'old comrades' who now back a proposal that would wreck the organisation they spent years building; 'old comrades' who commission Cunliffe - a man corrupted to his bones in the Healyite school - to write polemics for them; 'old comrades' who collapse into the DCF's 'broad church Trotskyism'; old comrades who stand for such stuff as Cunliffe's paranoia about the I-CL plot to enter and destroy the old WSL - it will be a lot easier to explain to new people than to these comrades whose political confusion has reduced them to mere ballast to be manipulated by the WLF in the fight between the WLF and us.

I am tempted to quote Trotsky on the sorry role played in the Bolshevik party by many 'old Bolsheviks'. But let it pass.

35. COMPARING US TO THE WRP

So we have joined "the Gerry Healy school of democratic centralism". I have written a lengthy separate reply to Smith's allegation that we are identical with the SLI/WRP.

No, we are not sitting ducks like the WRP! In the first place there will not be such a market for Smith's story. He does not have the same star status. In the second place, Smith's horror stories against us depend on lies - against the WRP they didn't. In the third place, the WSL has a deserved reputation on the Left as libertarian Trotskyists - our press will be and is the clearest answer to the lie that we practise bureaucratic monolithism. By 1975 the WRP was already well known as having a gangster-like regime.

A glance through the files of our paper will be enough to convince most people that this 'divorce' was unavoidable. I do not think the organisation will have any difficulty in explaining to the Notts miners we recruit why we refused to turn the organisation towards a two-month fight with Smith about the 'regime', up to a special conference, and instead threw them out and turned to the miners' strike.

36. WHO MADE THE SPLIT?

The split drive came from the WLF. They declared a faction after the April 1983 conference. They seceded from the organisation, over time, without actually leaving it. They spent their time in the organisation on a constantly escalating campaign of agitation and denunciation and scandal-mongering against the leadership which was 'worse than the trade union bureaucracy'. They set themselves on a course which could end no other way than in a split. They tried, finally, to subordinate the organisation during the miners' strike to their own internal factional concerns by way of calling for a special conference on 'the internal situation', as their numbers allowed them to do at will.

Yes, we expelled them - after they had made it perfectly plain that the alternative was a more prolonged, drawn-out and damaging split.

37. THE I-CL DECISION ON THE 1981 FUSION

A misunderstanding. There was an I-CL conference decision for fusion if possible taken in August 1980. The NC carried out that decision. There was full documentation, local discussions, an extended NC (i.e. with non-NC members invited to attend too) in February 1981 - there was plenty of involvement and discussion.

No significant section of the I-CL was hostile to the fusion. Most members, in fact, were very enthusiastic. But after the fusion some quickly became very hostile to it continuing. After mid-1982 possibly a majority of the ex-I-CL was hostile to the fusion, with good cause: they were trapped in an endless round of degrading and stupid wrangles.

38. THE MAJORITY NOT TOUGH ENOUGH

Certainly we were not tough enough. We made so many concessions to the WLF without getting any cooperation in return that we made it possible for them to eat their cake and have it - to be privileged members with scarcely any enforceable duties and responsibilities. Possibly also we stored up trouble for the future in the early stages of the fusion and pre-fusion by giving the impression that there was no limit to our patience and tolerance and desire to get agreement.

39. THE MAJORITY AND DISCIPLINE

Before the fusion there were problems on the I-CL EC with Khan. It is totally untrue that the other ex-I-CL people 'covered' for her behaviour.

What we did do, however, in the period after the October 1981 NC (for which see below), was to try to prevent her from being driven out of the organisation, and the work she led being wrecked, by heavy-handed assaults by the old WSL men on the EC - of whom the most insensitive and destructive was, probably, Levy.

Khan was actually continuing the work of WF - as we had agreed to do at fusion. The whole drive of the women round Todd was to tear down and spoil everything about WF which might detract or divert from the centrality of what they were doing. That is why we defended Khan.

Khan was unhappy with the fusion and said so. She was the only I-CLer to express positive opposition to fusion, though she was finally persuaded to agree to it. Her opposition was based on her experience in women's work with the old WSL.

The old WSL had a 'women's paper' - actually it was just a general old-WSL paper with a 'women's' face - concerned with 'struggles' and 'occupations' almost exclusively and essentially having a 'female syndicalist' notion of women's politics. On questions like positive discrimination they were backward. As well as the dominant section of old WSL women led by Todd, there was a submerged group of more advanced women, who were beaten down inside the old WSL, and very much out of favour with Todd. (One of my big gaffes early in the fusion was to propose one of them - Eliot - for an I-CL/old-WSL parity committee).

The I-CL was doing broad-scale women's work, engaged in campaigning on a wide range of issues and publishing a very popular women's paper. All of this extremely promising work was centrally Khan's work: other comrades contributed, but the flair and drive and creativity was hers.

At the second WF conference in 1980 the WSL women ^{then} turned up, made a sectarian intervention jointly with Workers Power, and published a laying account of what had happened.

In the fusion talks it quickly became plain that no agreement was possible on women's work. Logically what the old WSL women were doing would fit easily into, and enrich and complement, the broader work initiated by the I-CL. But from the beginning Todd adopted a very hostile attitude to Khan, and her contributions in the fusion talks were mainly lectures to us on the importance of transitional demands.

Basically Todd's drive was to scale down what the I-CL women were doing to the narrow syndicalist dimensions of the old WSL work - and to keep herself centre-stage. She bitterly resented Khan's position as full-time women's organiser - which by any standards of achievement she was the best person to hold - and in retrospect her agitation against Khan was the first example of

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an attempt to relate to others in the League as to the bureaucracy.

On the good side, Todd was a very energetic and talented comrade, or seemed so to people who saw her in operation. The problem was that she was politically uneducated and very subjective. She was used to being the star of the show, expected it, and fought for it.

She had been educated in such attitudes by the Smith group. Herself of petty-bourgeois background, she dropped the 'gs' from the ends of her words and was a bigoted workerist. She was the 'Smith' of the women's work, the consort of Zeus (as Hunt was the 'Smith' of the youth work).

Either this problem would hold us fusion indefinitely, or we would have to declare it a special area and hope to solve the problems in a common organisation. We chose the latter option, but we never solved the problems.

Some of us, in thinking that they could be solved like that, committed an error that is relevant to our present discussion on the split with Smith - the error of rationalism. Rationally and formally there was no reason why the two types of activity could not dovetail. But the factional dynamic was decisive, and that prevented what was the logical and best development.

Women's commissions became terrible beargardens.

Khan herself tried to co-opt and cooperate with the Todd group. This was to some extent under pressure from me, but it was also her own inclination. She was hurt and upset by the venom of these 'sisters'. She tried to avoid the clashes.

Holding the women's commission together, and actually fusing it into one, depended on one decisive thing - that the League leadership kept a common front and a common constant pressure on the warring sides for peace, cooperation, goodwill and constructive work.

The October 1981 NC and the subsequent EC were the point at which we ceased to have that. It was the first important break in the fusion.

As part of trying to conciliate Todd, Khan proposed that she give the women's report to the NC. Khan did not reciprocate. She did not even mention the plans for WF work which had been commonly agreed, but instead used the occasion to launch a vicious sectarian attack on WF and Khan.

The old WSL leaders were put up against the gun. Either they would react with disapproval and try to control Todd, or they would back her. They backed her.

Cunliffe did it immediately, at the NC. (He has had a more subservient attitude to the female Smith than to the other one). At the subsequent EC Smith launched a vicious attack on Khan which drove her from the room in tears. In keeping with my then ultra-cautious policy of avoiding conflict so as to give the fusion a chance to jell, I didn't defend her. (Kinnell, did, though).

It soon became every clear that the sine qua non for constructive women's work was absent - a leadership that would justly and impartially insist on joint work and a constructive attitude. Inevitably, the consequence was that myself and others blocked with Khan and defended her against very crude attempts by Levy, Smith and Jones (and of course Cunliffe, who in all this placed his skills as a polemicist at the disposal of Todd) to take direct control of her work about which they knew nothing and against which they were prejudiced. The alternative was to see important work destroyed.

The problem was that Khan simultaneously went over towards straight feminism - a development made more difficult for us to deal with or moderate because of the behaviour of the old WSL EC members.

Khan resigned from the League in July 1982. She is not a renegade as Cunliffe has said. She says she is still a Trotskyist, but that Trotskyism has no feminist dimension.

She supported the ILEA leadership against teachers in a dispute over

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compulsory transfers. Those on our side of the argument have the right to condemn her for that. But do the DCF, the allies of Smith, the defender of Booth, who helps the council of which he is a leading member fight the NALGO nursery workers?

Cunliffe also accuses me on indiscipline.

I did absent myself from some weeks from the EC in early 1982. "Tantrums over his personal status"? Where does that notion come from? By way of analogy with the status-obsessed Smith, I suppose. It's the sheerest nonsense.

A vicious fight erupted on the EC during the TILC conference of December 1981 and Smith, Jones, Levy and Cunliffe used an accidental majority to partly overturn the recent NC decision on Polish self-determination (they would put the bare slogan in the TILC resolution, but not any motivation of it). The first discussion on the pretensions of the 'worker leadership' came out of that.

Rather than react subjectively - I felt very annoyed and very much inclined to have a go at them - I kept away from the EC until I had made my mind up about what it was best to do about the situation. I did not absent myself from work.

And my rent: whether I could have saved the organisation money is and was a matter of opinion. I didn't think so. This level of discussion is quite good from the DCF, and especially from Cunliffe, for whom the decision to put the full-timers on the dole was a factor (probably) in his withdrawal from the paper. Quite good from Levy, too, who did not implement that decision for months, and when he did so bungled it so he got no money.

40. MY ARTICLE ON POLAND

My article on Poland was to be on the lines of the December NC decision in favour of self-determination for Poland. Smith, Jones, etc opposed that decision. It was never written. The reader may understand why when you learn the fate of an amendment I wrote to the December 1981 TILC resolution along the same lines. At the EC (mentioned above) we never got further than a discussion about whether to discuss it, which ended in a formal vote not to discuss it, justified by vehement attacks on me for proposing 'my personal line' and not 'the line of the movement'.

The arrogance was that of the 'worker leadership', who denounced the NC decision as 'hi-jacking' (see the documentation in IB 89).

41. DISCUSSION ON IRELAND

The minutes for late 1981 show me proposing the right of my critics to reply to me in the paper - 'calmly', I hoped. But it was impossible to have any discussion, calm or otherwise, with them - all they were capable of was denunciation.

One of the earliest negative experiences of the fusion was when in late 1981 I gave an extended 'perspectives' analysis of Ireland at the EC. Though nobody seriously argued against it, the Smith group were adamantly opposed to adopting its conclusions. The old dog-in-the-manger story: they had nothing to say and were determined to stop us from saying what we had to say. Also, they were looking over their shoulders at Piggot (cf. item 18).

"Provoking angry, ill-considered public exchanges in our press"? The first big outcry against a piece I wrote was against an article putting a line established unanimously at an EC, on the Chelsea bombing. Smith (Jones was an exception) allowed his followers in Oxford and Leicester to personalise the ensuing outcry against me.

The other outcry was against the idea that some form of federalism is necessary in Ireland.

This idea had been repeatedly expressed by WF/I-CL since 1969 - and in our paper for the first period of fusion without challenge. It was made into a factional issue by Jones in 1983 for nakedly arbitrary, gang-warfare reasons.

How did the debate in the paper on 'federalism' arise? Andrea C, a member of the (then informal) WLF, did an interview for the paper with an NHS shop steward from Northern Ireland. The steward is a Militant supporter, and expressed Militant's line that workers' unity in economic struggles such as the NHS dispute contained the solution to Ireland's problems. Andrea's questions in the interview did not query or criticise this line.

We were rushed on the paper that week and the interview went in without an adequate introduction - and, to make it worse, a stupid headline, written by Cunliffe in haste, which appeared to endorse the Militant line: "NHS dispute shows way to unity".

The Morrowites in Nottingham protested. (Of course, they did not know who had been responsible. They thought they were attacking the ex-I-CL 'revisionists'). As part of the response I wrote a polemical article for the paper against Militant's views on Ireland.

In one sentence of that article I mentioned that it was my personal view that some sort of 'federalism' would be necessary in a united Ireland.

Jones responded with a bitterly denunciatory letter, and that's how the "public exchanges" started.

"Force comrades to consider and vote on a new text at short notice last August"? The August conference resolution was only an edited write-up of ideas argued in previous IBs (including one, IB 66, which gave a pretty comprehensive account of WF/I-CL's attitudes on Ireland over the years). We were never in favour of forcing the issue to a vote: we supported a move by Patrick M. not to vote on our resolution.

Meanwhile, Jones was changing his amendment to be voted on over bombings - not just at 'short notice' but twice in the middle of the ^{conference} debate.

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43. DISCUSSION ON THE GENERAL STRIKE

For our tendency it was, as far back as WF, and it will continue to be, in the WSL, normal to allow political minorities freedom in the press - as in the recent general strike discussion.

Why does Cunliffe talk about Keith's "private" (?) differences over international work? Why doesn't he mention that for six years I have had "differences" over "international work" - over our line on Palestine? It wouldn't help the image of a dictatorship in which I'm either the dictator, or one of the dictators, and the dictatorship line is the League line.

44. VOTING ON IB 92

Nobody should vote for IB 92 if they agree with ideas such as that we need more internal education (which no-one disputes) but disagree with what is specific to IB 92 - the muddled federalism.

On the readmission of the WLF people should vote on the basic political issue, not this or that detail. They should vote according to the fact that there are, and for certain will be, two groups, and according to which group they are going to be in.

Anyone who votes to let the WLF back is not only voting for an action which will not severely damage the WSL - through the ensuing internal battle and messy second split - but they are also giving a vote that will aid the hostile Smith group (including Cunliffe) to misrepresent their separation from us and put in in the worst light for us.

45. THE POSSIBILITY OF REUNIFICATION

See part 1.

46. FOUR CONFERENCES A YEAR: See above, part 2.

* For item 42, see above, item 39.

47. THE EDITORIAL BOARD

It is difficult to know what the DCF are demanding of us in the way of an EB. In the period before he left the paper Cunliffe's demand was for one type of EB as distinct from another - another, 'ideal', type of EB which was impossible in the circumstances. IB 92 describes the EB in such a way that it would be a parallel leadership body to the EC (see IB 115, p.10/5).

Why I should be opposed to being 'accountable' to leading bodies when, according to the demonology, they are all merely my rubber stamps anyway - that is something I don't understand and would like some of the DCF to explain to me. But the devil works in devious ways, doesn't he?

48. THE EB AND THE EC

What Cunliffe writes here is quite different from what IB 92 says. It's quite reasonable, even - for a change.

49. DUES, PAPER MONEY, FINES

On October 28 1983, the OSC voted to impose petty fines on comrades late with their dues assessments. It was the same sort of fine as we have imposed on people for being late at conference. The decision was circulated to the whole organisation through IB 76 in November 1983. No-one dissented - not Cunliffe, not anyone else. But then when it came to imposing the fines on the immediate constituency of Smith in Oxford, they made a great hue and cry about it.

The decision was not "by Kinnell", but by the OSC - Levy included.

50. MINORITIES IN THE PAPER; 51. AFGHANISTAN

See part 2, above.

52. 'DIGNITARIES' IN THE PRESS

The demand for minority 'equality with the dignitaries' in an absurdity. How the League relates to dignitaries, and how members of the League relate to each other in the public press, are quite different matters. Psychologically it is very revealing that Smith and his advocate Cunliffe raised the demand for Smith's access to the press in terms of equality with reformist dignitaries.

Personally Cunliffe was bitterly opposed to publishing the material of some of the most important reformists willing to write for us. It is a matter of tactics and judgment - but his preference would be for a Socialist Press type arrangement in which he could go off with half-cock abuse from the sidelines, such as his dismissal of the R**C as "errand boys for Benn".

53. 'ACOLYTES' AND 'HANDRAISERS'

This is what the DCF platform says: "Decision-making is the prerogative of one or two key people, relying on virtually automatic endorsement from political acolytes at lower levels..." Our political method, according to them, is such that: "Its logic is to assemble a tiny 'cadre' of docile handraisers".

54. THE DCF AS AN UNPRINCIPLED COMBINATION

The DCF is an unprincipled combination on the Labour Party. It unites sectarians like Cunliffe on one side, and Parsons on the other, round a vague accusation that the majority is "sectarian" on the issue.

The DCF reduces the 'spirit of the fusion' to an absurd caricature. At fusion we precisely itemised our known serious differences. The DCF papers over the differences that would split them down the middle if they had the leadership of the organisation and had to work out a line. Gunther, Mellor and Hedges wanted (perhaps rightly) to expel Booth much earlier: Parsons (IB 111) bitterly condemns us for expelling him even after he had openly crossed class lines. Yet they all jointly sign a statement that we are "sectarian" on local government politics.

The only 'spirit of the fusion' the DCF represents is the fusion seen

through the eyes of a 'broad church man' like Parsons who thinks the solution to the problems of division among Trotskyists is to blur or ignore the political issues that divide. (See IB 115, p. 5/1).

More than that, though. The permissible differences in a party are quite wide. You can proceed by clearly defined minorities and majorities. The permissible differences for a faction are very much less than for a party.

When some of the DCF ally with sectarians on one side and opportunists on the other to counterpose themselves to us on the Labour Party question - even though they agree with us - that is an unprincipled combination which substitutes for political clarification the method of aggregating together a gang which does not actually have political agreement. If such an unprincipled gang actually wins the power struggle, it must inevitably shatter.

Does the DCF agree among themselves on 'the most fundamental of questions' - the party? Frankly, I don't know.

They will presumably all vote for IB 92 - unless they have walked out by the time we reach that point on the agenda - yet, as we've seen, Cunliffe repudiates some of their key distinct proposals. Apart from that IB 92 and the platform are so fuzzily written that it is hard to be sure what they are saying. Vague formulas designed to accommodate different opinions play a big role in both documents.

In IB 115 I show that the end result of what they propose would inevitably be a version of the old WSL regime - titular high-status 'worker leadership', bonapartism, local chieftains, blurred consensus politics. Some DCF members consciously want that. Others are probably not aware of the logic of what they have put their names to.

The DCF's common position on the 'party needed for the working class' is not a positive programme, but a negative one, based on gripes against the alleged abuses of the WSL.

55. THE PETITION AND PLEBISCITARY POLITICS

We said that Levy's petition launched on April 1 had a lot in common with a plebiscite. It was not a call for a special conference. Such a call had been made already and there was no point repeating it. It was an attempt to drum up individual signatures to pressurise the NC not to proceed as it was constitutionally entitled to do against the WLF.

On the call for a special conference, see IB 94.

56. CUNLIFFE AND THE LABOUR PARTY

The O. situation has been complicated over the last period. The left has been fragmented. We ourselves have run up against contradictions in our own work, exemplified in the activities of some of our people in local government positions. It may well be that some of our work has been deficient.

But the DCF represents vastly different viewpoints on the LP, assembled together in an unprincipled block, not to clarify any deficiencies but to use them as a stick to beat us with.

Strangely enough, the dominant segment of this unprincipled block right now seems to be the Parsons/Oliver segment, who are soft on B and on the local government issues (see Parsons on Booth, IB 111). These unite with Cunliffe, who did a complete about-turn in the 1982-3 LP discussion - having collaborated with Hill and Kinnell to draft a document on the LP along our political lines, he then, when Smith snapped his fingers, lined up with the sectarians at the April conference. And there are others like Gunther who agree with the majority.

How can such a grouping collectively know whether the League is dis-oriented on the LP? How can they - from their radically different viewpoints - provide any solution if we are confused? Whose solution will it be? The sectarian Cunliffe's, who still defends IB 48 (the sectarian document on the LP at the April 1983 conference)? Parsons'? Gunther's? All in all it is just

a little cheeky for the DCF unprincipled combination, and for Cunliffe especially, to go on about our 'sectarianism' on the LP.

But worse than that. Why do they make such a fuss about our important but not earth-shattering failure to circulate model resolutions? Because they want to counteract the justified feeling of pride the organisation has in the work we have done around the miners' strike.

We have carried out the NC decision to throw ourselves into this work, and made some impact. Unavoidably this has unbalanced our work and the paper: we have simply had to shift resources and emphasis from other things to the miners' strike. Hill, whom they tried to censure on the model resolutions, has been the organiser in the field for this work.

But the DCF do not feel any joy or satisfaction at the successes of the organisation: very much the opposite. Last year Cunliffe participated in the LP discussion at the April 1983 conference as one of a group of sectarians accusing us of "not wanting to do industrial work". Now that we are for the duration concentrating on industrial work of a very spectacular kind he joins Parsons and co. to denounce us as sectarians on the LP!

The DCF document does say that we are sectarian on the LP. Unclearly, but it says it. It has a section entitled "Sectarian Regression" under which the first item is the LP, the other being the 'world Trotskyist movement'.

The DCF's comments on the LP are not those of comrades constructively pointing to deficiencies, but of a hostile and embittered competing force.

57. THE DCF AND B.

We did not say the DCF leans towards B. Some DCF people do. The DCF "fights for such clarity" on the O. and B. by having the opportunist view of Parsons filtered through the sectarian writer Cunliffe.

However, it should be noted that B. can be attractive to both wings of the WLF/DCF. The opportunists can liquidate into it, and the prestige-conscious Smith could combine practical liquidation into it with the pretence of an independent 'party' which would be part of it. After all, at the heart of B. is one of the weirdest sects on the left in Britain, the Chartist minority.

58. THE DCF AND SOCIALIST ACTION

Cunliffe protests too much! At our February 1983 conference Parsons, Mellor and others called for unity with the IMG. At the April 1983 conference Parsons and Oliver put out a document proposing unity with the IMG (and the Chartists). At the November 1983 NC Cunliffe proposed we go for fusion with the USFI.

On this as on the LP there are different views within the DCF. But on this too the Parsons strand seems dominant. In IB 115 (part 6) I argued that the most probable of the limited range of courses of action open to the WLF/DCF is liquidation into Socialist Action. Time will tell.

59. LEVY AND THE SMITH GROUP

At the NC I moved this resolution which was carried: "This NC accepts that Levy did not explicitly urge Picton to leave the WSL and go with the Oxford faction. However ed Levy does say that if Smith and co. are not readmitted the WSL will be a bureaucratic rump and that the best prospects of a democratic organisation capable of development lie with the Oxford faction's prospective organisation. In substance the message of this position is in fact to suggest to comrades that they should join the Oxford faction".

I was mistaken on the letter of the question, and I acknowledged it. I was not mistaken on the substance of the matter.

60. THE DCF AND THE WLF

The DCF is not largely composed of ex-I-CLers. (There are 10 out of 20

by my count). We do not say that those ex-I-CLers are agents of the WLF. We do brand Cunliffe, Levy and Parsons as people who are consciously working inside the WSL for the WLF outside it.

The Cunliffe touch spoils this bit, too. He denies that the five ex-I-CL people whom he mentions are 'agents of Smith' (we never said they were), so as to spread the idea that we are making false accusations. But he can't resist adding: "To brand these comrades as 'agents for Smith' is to suggest that the despised 'Oxford faction' sank far deeper political roots into the old I-CL than Carolan... managed to do in the old WSL".

In his capacity as official polemicist of the DCF Cunliffe denies that any of the five are 'agents' of the WLF; in his capacity as a died-in-the-wool 'worker leadership' groupie he cannot resist gloating about their 'success' in lining up a few ex-I-CLers to oppose the expulsion. He is denying that they are 'agents' but he cannot resist gloatingly implying that they are objectively with Smith. Truth is a hardy plant; you find green shoots of it sprouting even in the most unlikely places, even among fields of lies.

Why are some ex-I-CLers helping people - Levy, Cunliffe, Parsons - who are consciously working for a hostile organisation? It's a serious question.

Some of these comrades - Oliver, Mellor, Gunther, Armstrong - have a long history of being mavericks and habitual dissidents in the I-CL. At most of the crucial turning points in our history some or all of them have been out of step. What's new now is that the situation is complicated and we are not having an 'internal' debate or policy discussion. We are fighting to free the organisation from the parasitic grouping of the WLF and to protect it from disruption. In this situation the traditional mavericks of the I-CL are backing a proposal that would wreck the organisation.

Used to wandering and making a show of their independence, they have now wandered across the organisational lines.

I don't have a neat political answer to the question why people like Gunther and Armstrong and Oliver, after many years as Leninists, put their names to the confused federalism of IB92, or allow a semi-refined Healyite like Cunliffe - someone whose methods and politics they have all their political lives despised - to write a platform for them.

Nor do I know exactly why people who stood their ground on our position on the EEC through the long chauvinist gale should associate themselves with the philistine jeering about the "two Marxists" which comes naturally to Cunliffe and Parsons.

Most strange of all is that this grouping of (mainly) professional 'independents' should wind up supporting the petty ideology of deference to Smith. Nevertheless, that is what they are doing. Cunliffe is right to claim them for it.

Perhaps the answer is that people get disoriented, subjective, or just older; people change their minds; people are slow on the uptake. For most of them I could, I think, attempt to supply psychological or existential explanations, but I won't.

They themselves have quite a bit of political explaining to do, though - unless they have also changed their minds about the importance of honest political book-keeping. Cunliffe's oblique claiming of them for the Smith group may serve some of them well by bringing them up against the unmitigable realities and choices they face on June 30.

