

Articles by Kinnell

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## SOME COMMENTS ON THE QUELCH AND McINNIS DOCUMENTS

Kinnell

### 1. Quelch's document (IB 74)

It is unfortunate, and in a sense unfair to Quelch, that the hectic factional disputation in the 8 months since he produced this document has squeezed out any proper discussion of it. I don't think the document can simply be voted for by the conference now - partly because it is obviously out of date, and partly because I think some of the ideas in it are wrong. But I think the conference should find some formula to note the positive ideas in it and resolve to continue - or, rather, start - discussion round the problems raised.

Even where I disagree with Quelch, it seems to me that he is making a constructive effort to address real problems.

On the primary importance of theoretical self-clarification, the need to steer away from stunted 'orthodoxy', and our immediate crying need to develop internal education (pp.1-2) I agree with Quelch.

I don't think his idea for a wide range of 'commissions' as 'investigative branches of the movement' in various fields of knowledge, from philosophy and economics to the study of reformism, is a good one (p.3). In a mass party something like it might be reasonable. In a small group like ours, such a range of technically-ill-equipped ideological 'cottage industries' would (a) not be practically feasible: we have enough trouble getting our basic, essential structures functioning; (b) if it produced anything, would most like produce sporadic half-baked intellectualising.

The idea for a 'reformism commission' strikes me as particularly off-key. Some of us would just go to our TU and O meetings. A special band of 'investigators' would meanwhile 'investigate' reformism!

Better to raise the level of discussion and study would be more area and national day-schools - and, if we can take decisions at this conference which will free the IB from the literary reflections of faction-fighting, more articles in the IB of the type of Stanford's recent contribution on Central America.

### 'New forms of organisation'

The central section of Quelch's document - pp.3-9 - proposes a strategy for the class struggle based round 'new forms of organisation'.

We should, he argues, try to develop NHS defence committees and 'new-style CND committees', 'drawing in YCND, CND, O and unions'. "The committees and new-style CND are revolutionary organisations providing us with an alternative mobilising focus for the working class without side-stepping the fight against the bureaucracy and their politics". (p.9)

I think there is a fundamental overestimation of forms of organisation here. After all, NHS defence committees have developed on a large scale since Quelch wrote. Useful they are. "Revolutionary organisations" they are not.

What Trotsky wrote about workers' councils applies to more advanced forms of working-class organisation generally: "The Councils represent an organisational form, and only a form. There is no way of 'preparing for' Councils except by means of a correct revolutionary policy applied in all spheres of the working class movement: there is no special, specific 'preparation for' Councils". ('The ILP and the FI', September 1935).

Sometimes it may be possible to identify a particular organisational form as the vehicle for a revolutionary political development, and consciously work to make it such - as Rosa Luxemburg did with the mass strike after 1905, Lenin and Trotsky with the soviets in 1917, and Gramsci with the 'internal commissions' in Italy in 1919-20. But in each case it was not a matter of the Marxists creating a revolutionary development by virtue of devising a particularly clever organisational form.

The overestimation of organisational form here is, I think, linked to

some other mistakes. On page 3 Quelch writes that: "Any movement/strike, demo or other protest, against either the government or capitalists is now expressly political and as such a reformist leadership will connive for its downfall, only revolutionary leadership is capable of pointing the way forward to victory".

But the reformist Scargill leadership of the NUM cannot be said to be "conniving for the downfall" of the miners' strike. (And that, by the way, shows that the NC resolution saying, "We've lost the election to the Tories but we can still beat them on the picket lines", was not quite the "poor joke" Quelch thinks it was).

Reformism does not always and everywhere mean no struggle and utterly routine forms of organisation. It is more flexible than that. Militant struggle and novel forms of organisation are not in and of themselves revolutionary.

There are a couple of other smaller points in this section which I disagree with. On the other hand, I think Quelch is right in his emphasis on the strategic importance of the O.

### Youth; students; WSL

Quelch's comments on youth work seem to me on the whole quite sensible, except that I'm not sure how big the real possibilities are for unemployed work as distinct from work round YTS. "The only thing that separates the two is 40 hours of work a week", writes Quelch - but that's quite some separation.

I agree entirely with Quelch on the importance of student work, and the opportunities in the FE sector.

Quelch concludes with a criticism of Carolan's and my 'Building the WSL' document (IB 50, reprinted IB 107) as "purely organisational", "substituting organisational changes for a political analysis". I don't agree. 'Building the WSL', as I see it, is part of a whole lot of documents and analyses which the EC majority has produced, covering many areas of work and aspects of the class struggle. And the organisation question is political. 'Building the WSL' does not concern itself mainly with administrative proposals, or 'organisational' proposals in the narrowest sense, but with the politics of organisation.

### 2. McInnis's document (IB 114)

McInnis starts off with some foolish and typically DCF jibes. But from page 2 onwards the document addresses a serious and important political argument, though I think its conclusions are wrong.

The gist of it is that McInnis proposes two new and central slogans - 'an alternative working class plan of production', and 'an alternative working class social plan'.

In the I-CL manifesto (p.19) we wrote: "In situations of acute economic dislocation, governmental crisis, and dual power (or the potential rapid emergence of dual power), generalised slogans along the lines of 'a workers' plan for production' can be vital in the mobilisation of the working class to struggle for a workers' government and the dictatorship of the proletariat. Portugal in 1975, and Russia in 1917, were such situations".

(I think the immediate post-World-War-2 situation in Europe, when our comrades put forward the slogan of 'A Working Class Reconstruction Plan', was probably also such a situation).

"With a relatively stable capitalist state, however, as in Britain now, slogans like 'a workers' economic plan' or 'a socialist plan for production' have no revolutionary validity.

"Either they are confused abstract propaganda for socialism; or they appeal to the Labour Party and/or TUC to prepare that 'workers' plan', ie. they simply reproduce the slogan 'a Labour government with a socialist programme'; or, if applied only to single sectors of the economy or single firms (for example Lucas) they have a dangerously sectional and class-collaborationist dynamic".

In early 1981 we had a discussion in the I-CL which concluded that a limited revision of this conclusion was necessary. We started raising demands for a public works programme at trade union rates of pay and for workers' plans for particular industries or groups of industries.

We still, however, rejected the general slogan of 'a workers' plan' or 'a socialist plan for production'. The difference between the specific slogans and the general slogan is rather like the difference between a specific demand for nationalisation, say, of the supply industries to the Coal Board and a general demand like Militant's 'nationalisation of the 200 monopolies'.

Since the fusion we have been raising the more specific "workers' plans" slogans from time to time. For example, we have raised the slogan round the miners' strike of "a workers' plan for the energy industry, transport and steel. Such a plan would have to be a plan for energy, transport and steel throughout Europe". Rose has just started a series of articles for the paper on the issue of a socialist energy policy.

However, in my view, the way we have raised such slogans has been pretty inadequate - generally at the level of a slogan tacked on here or there. In this respect I think that some of McInnis's arguments point to real failings. For example, I think one of the big weaknesses of our paper's coverage of the NHS pay dispute was the failure to say anything beyond a most perfunctory minimum on the theme of a working-class, socialist programme for health services.

That said, I still think the I-CL Manifesto's arguments apply against McInnis's too-general proposed slogans. They would have the same problems as Militant's formula, 'a socialist plan for production'.

#### Page 1 of McInnis

Back down into the factional bearpit, however, for a few final words on page 1 of McInnis's document.

As it happens, the only organised discussion in the League on new technology - at the summer school last year - was proposed and introduced by me, and attended exclusively by majority supporters (plus one stray Smith faction supporter who has since left the organisation). I think I'm right in saying that all the articles in the paper on this issue have been by me, too.

Not enough? Certainly not. But I suspect that McInnis's complaints about "the leadership's lack of interest" - unfavourably compared with the Smith faction's "obvious awareness of such problems" - is more to do with the Smith faction leaders' greater supply of "politicians' bonhomie" than any objective political judgment.

And Carolan "revising our position on Ireland to make it more acceptable to the O. Left"? 'Federalism', right or wrong, is not a revision but a policy we have argued since 1969. We have a principled record on Ireland - including in the period when hostility to the Republicans was far stronger in Britain than it is now - which make these accusations of us capitulating to Labour Left public opinion pretty scurrilous. And besides, anyone who simply bothers to register the facts of the world around them can observe that the Labour Left - the Briefing/Ken Livingstone segment of it, anyway - has in recent years gone over to a vapid, diluted form of Sinn Fein nationalism on Ireland. No, we are not trimming our sails to be acceptable to the Left!

## WHY DISCUSS THE FALKLANDS/MALVINAS?

Kinnell

Some comrades have objected to having "The South Atlantic war and our programme against imperialism" on the conference agenda.

I can well understand why they feel weary of the whole business and want to push it aside. But there are important reasons of principle why we must discuss it.

The revolutionary party aims to be the 'memory of the class'. It does not just react to events ad hoc, one by one, but attempts to develop a coherent body of doctrine, enabling it to relate the lessons of the past to the tests of the present. When it makes a serious political mistake, it corrects it and accounts for it politically. That may be painful, but it is not optional.

We made a mistake at the September 1982 conference on the South Atlantic war and on the more general theory of imperialism. 17 out of 19 members of the NC think so. 5 out of 5 members of the EC think so. Every single member present at our London area pre-conference meeting thought so. Certainly a big majority of the organisation thinks so.

Even some of those who voted for the resolution passed in September 1982 think it contains theoretical mistakes. I have never yet found anybody who agrees with that resolution's "theory of enclaves".

Now what happens when there are events where our response depends on our general programme against imperialism (and there are many such events)? Clearly any NC or EC elected by this conference will apply the criteria and method of the defeated resolution of September 1982 rather than the adopted one.

In fact, that's already happened. Our attitude on the war in Chad - though the Smith faction raised no complaint against it - was clearly not based on the sort of criteria that would lead to support for Argentina in the South Atlantic war.

In the argument about Ireland last summer, the Smith faction made it plain that they saw the underlying theoretical issues as the same as on the South Atlantic war. And they were right, to an extent. (See IB 106).

So we are actually being inconsistent. Our attitudes on Ireland and on Chad are based on different criteria and theoretical foundations to our formal attitude on the South Atlantic war.

For Marxists that sort of inconsistency is not a small problem.

Besides, it is foolish to pretend that this inconsistency is some odd doctrinal quirk which can safely be left in its dusty corner. The issue of class politics vs. 'camp' politics - as I would see it - has been central in the political life of the WSL for two years now. Certainly the discussion has developed in the most unsatisfactory way, befouled by all sorts of extraneous issues and pseudo-issues, but it has happened, and underneath all the shit there are serious questions involved. The least we can do is draw some conclusions.

Only a conference can change a conference decision. So there are two alternatives. Either this conference registers what a big majority of us clearly believe - that we made a mistake in September 1982; or we continue indefinitely knowing that our criteria that we use for present-day politics are quite inconsistent with the criteria underlying what still remains a formal position of the WSL. The latter alternative is politically corrupt.

Some other practical considerations also demand that we get the formal League position on the South Atlantic war into line with what the big majority of the members of the WSL actually think about it.

We went through the war with politics unlike those of almost any other

orthodox Trotskyist grouping. Then when the war was over the special conference in September 1982 decided by 2 votes that we were wrong.

By implication it condemned what we had done during the war.

Now even then the majority at the conference was false and artificial: it was achieved with the votes of inactive members. Even then a majority of the active members of the WSL were opposed to the decision.

If we had re-taken the vote at the February 1983 conference the position would have been overturned then. We didn't, because that was less important than minimising conflict with the Smith group. The consequence has been, however, that according to strict League legality we cannot openly explain our justify our performance during the war.

In fact what happens when the matter is raised - for example by Socialist Action among the youth - our comrades have had to ignore the legalities and defend us. Strictly speaking they have been breaking all the rules.

It would be absurd to do otherwise. Our constitution explicitly does not demand of members that they positively argue something they don't agree with. But we have hardly any members who actually agree that we were wrong during the war. It is absurd that to defend the viewpoint of the big majority of the organisation, comrades have to break strict League legality.

Even before the expulsion of the Smith faction the supporters of Argentina were not more than one quarter of the organisation. Now they are a tiny fraction of it. And our motive for not re-raising the matter at last year's conferences - the hope of establishing cooperation with the Smith group - has now disappeared.

This situation simply brings contempt upon League legality. It should be changed. The conference has three options:

- \* Reiterate support for the decision of the September 1982 conference (very unlikely);
- \* Reverse the 1982 decision and adopt a resolution which puts the position actually held by the big majority of the organisation;
- \* Leave things as they are.

Conference should be clear on what the consequences of the latter choice will be. Because the present situation is plainly untenable any likely new NC will have to ignore the formal League position and publicly explain and defend what we did during the war - to argue, according to the opinion of the big majority of the WSL and of any likely NC, that we were right to do and say what we did and said during the Falklands war.

It would be better to straighten things out. The second option above is the only one that makes sense.

SOME COMMENTS ON MELLOR'S AMENDMENT ON INTERNATIONAL WORK

(IB 123, p.11)

Kinnell

1. I think the amendment is out of order. At the NC on May 5 the EC proposed our international work - i.e. contacts with other Trotskyists, etc. - as an item for the conference agenda. The NC, on Cunliffe's proposal, deleted this from the agenda and substituted a report focused on international solidarity work in relation to Ireland, Central America, South Africa, Turkey and Palestine.

Now of course it was open to anyone, in the period before the deadline for resolutions and documents, to try to put international work back on the agenda. But nobody did.

Mellor is trying to put it on the agenda by means of an amendment to a document dealing with something else. I don't see why.

I don't think it's being formalistic and pedantic about Standing Orders to say that this way of introducing a whole new major item onto the agenda at the last minute is out of order.

2. What September conference decision? There was a resolution carried at the February 1983 conference to pursue discussions with the IMG. Cunliffe, on behalf of the EC, wrote them a letter (printed in IB 50). They never replied. The NC discussed it in August and made a written report to the August 1983 conference that nothing further could be done for the moment.

3. There is quite a lot of unprincipled combinationism going on here.

Mellor wants more international work. Good. What sort of work?

More letters, bulletins, translations, etc? I would agree. But (a) that is not going to transform our position qualitatively; (b) surely part of the blame for inadequacies in that respect must fall on Cunliffe, who was half-full-time international secretary until late November. Yet Mellor's denunciation of us as "nationalistic and sectarian" is made in alliance with Cunliffe within the DCF.

Or does Mellor want what Cunliffe proposed at the November 1983 NC, a move for fusion with the USFI? If so, let him say so precisely, rather than talking about more international work in general. There are reasons other than "nationalistic and sectarian" ones for opposing such a move!

WHY NOT HAVE THE FULL SMITH FACTION PRESENT FOR THE APPEAL?

A comment on the DCF resolution on appeal procedure (IB 116) - Kinnell

One thing should be immediately obvious about the DCF resolution. The conclusion does not match the premiss. If the Smith faction actually are not a group, and cannot be dealt with as a group - if they are 35 individual cases - then just having them all in to listen is not adequate. Each case should be dealt with separately. Anything less is injustice.

The DCF don't argue that logical conclusion from their premiss because they know that it would be immediately seen as a filibuster - as a way of squeezing all other discussion out by making us have the identical argument 35 times over.

If that logical conclusion is false - and the DCF implicitly admit it is - then the DCF's premiss is false too. And we should look more closely at the conclusion they actually do draw.

If we are dealing with a group, then what is necessary for fair play is that a chosen spokesperson of that group has a reasonable opportunity to put their case. That we have. What purpose is served by having the rest of the group in, to listen and perhaps a few of them to make brief comments? (It could only be a few, otherwise we would be back with a blatant filibuster). No purpose of justice. The only purpose that could be served is that of creating a 'gallery', an emotional pressure, and a larger disposable body of people for demonstrations, disturbances, or walk-outs in the conference.

DOES THE SMITH FACTION WANT TO BE REINSTATED?

Kinnell

Some comrades will think this is a silly question. After all, isn't that what all the fuss is about: the Smith faction wants to be back in the WSL, and the NC majority wants them out?

It is not so simple. Yes, the Smith faction say they want to be back in the WSL. But they would, wouldn't they? If they didn't, they would completely dish the DCF and destroy their chances of pulling a 'second wave' out of the WSL.

In fact at the April 14 NC Smith said that they would probably not appeal to conference if the NC decided on a similar procedure for the appeal to that for the NC hearing - i.e. one spokesperson for the whole faction. The obvious explanation for their change of mind is the calculation about dishing the DCF.

Look at the evidence on other counts.

a) They haven't sold the paper.

Some comrades will say: "We expelled them. Of course they won't sell our paper!"

I can well understand how the expulsion would have made the Smith faction members hostile to the paper. They were, after all, pretty hostile even before that. But we should give them at least some credit for being political militants.

For political militants, matters such as selling papers are not decided by how you feel about the people who produce the paper. The Labour Party treats Trotskyists abominably. Yet a Trotskyist expelled from the Labour Party would still do work for it like canvassing - and if they didn't we would criticise them for allowing subjective reactions to overwhelm political calculations.

After they were thrown out of the WRP, Smith and his comrades protested about not having Workers Press supplied to them to sell. (See 'The Battle for Trotskyism').

It's a matter of political calculation.

What are the political considerations for and against selling the paper, for the Smith faction?

FOR 1: The political value of the paper in enlightening, educating, and clarifying people.

How you rate that value depends, of course, on your view of the paper's politics. But given what has been tabled for this conference, it is practically inconceivable that the paper's politics after the conference will be radically different from now (see item below on conference).

So if the political value of the paper is going to make it worth selling for the Smith faction after the conference, it makes it worth selling now. You could understand them not selling it if they were themselves producing something they thought was better. But they're not. They're going through the miners' strike - perhaps the most important workers' struggle in this country for a decade - without any political voice at all.

The idea of them selling the paper for its political value is in principle not at all absurd. After all, we have one comrade who was expelled with the Morrow faction and presumably is still in one or another wing of the WIL regularly selling the paper and sending us money for it.

FOR 2: The tactical, factional value of selling the paper.

If the Smith faction sold the paper, they could make a favourable impression on serious WSL members and increase their chances of reinstatement.

AGAINST 1: Their subjective alienation, as above.

AGAINST 2: If they sell the paper, then of course they will attract people to the paper. And if they don't take the idea of reinstatement very



seriously, that's a minus. By attracting people to the paper they would be attracting people to the WSL. And if they don't take the idea of being back in the WSL very seriously, that means, for them, attracting people to a competitor organisation.

What the fact that the Smith faction aren't selling the paper tells us is that the factors against outweigh for them the factors for. That gives a pretty dim picture of how seriously they want reinstatement.

b) They have refused practical collaboration

The factors here are very similar. Reasons (for them) for collaborating with us would be the possibility it gave them of functioning as political militants in the miners' strike (and how they rate that depends on their view of our politics); and the tactical value of impressing WSL members favourably and getting close relations with them to discuss with them.

Factors against: their alienation from us, as above, and the fear that collaborating with us might lead to them losing people to us rather than vice versa.

But there is an extra element here. Normally for an expelled faction to have practical collaboration with the organisation it was expelled from would mean the faction members continuing activity roughly similar to what they did before the expulsion, rather than changing their activity.

But in fact the Smith faction - so far as we can observe - has continued doing more or less exactly what it was doing before the expulsion, except that they now don't sell the paper (to whatever extent they did so previously), and they now conduct their battle against the WSL from outside it rather than inside it. To start practical collaboration with us, more than marginally, they would have to substantially change their activity.

Before the expulsion there was less practical collaboration between the Smith faction and the WSL majority - although we were notionally part of the same organisation - than there was between the old WSL and the I-CL in the months before fusion. The fact that the Smith faction members can continue their business as usual, and that means no practical collaboration with the WSL now, is clear proof of that. It should help people sort out what they think about the expulsion.

c) They voted for Socialist Action against SO at the LCI AGM

Smith's and Jones's answer on this is that the vote was wrong but 'understandable'. The DCF seem to take the same line, except that I haven't heard them even say that the vote was wrong. ("Perhaps SA had a better candidate" - Parsons).

I think it's clear proof that they are not serious about reinstatement. The vote was not a spur-of-the-moment, impulsive gesture of anger. It happened two weeks after they had been suspended. If they were serious about reinstatement, then obviously, even from the narrowest factional point of view, they should have voted for SO.

What political factors argued for voting for SA? That they agreed with SA politically, on Ireland, more than SO. And their alienation, as above.

d) The conditions they themselves lay down for reunification are unrealisable.

When asked at area meetings what conditions would be necessary for reunification, Smith has said: "A change of attitude by Carolan and Kinnell".\*

Now if Smith demanded specific, precise minority rights as a condition for reunification, that might be reasonable. And he might hope to get such minority rights enforced against and despite bad attitudes on the part of Carolan and me. (Or on the part of the outgoing NC majority).

\* What about Hill, Joplin, Parkinson, and the rest of the NC majority? Don't they have to "change their attitudes" too? Or does Smith think they are just "acolytes", "handraisers", who will become deferential to Smith if we do?

But he didn't. And he couldn't. After the April 1983 the Smith faction was given the fullest minority rights it was possible to give a minority without abandoning majority rule altogether. The reason the fusion continued to break down was that even those rights - and privileges - weren't enough for them.

"A change of attitude" is not an enforceable demand. I can't speak for Carolan, but I guess he would think, like me, that the conclusions we have reached about the political quality of the Smith faction and the impermissibility of a deferential "attitude" to Smith can be changed only by convincing us they are wrong. A conference vote can enforce measures we don't like, depose us from the leading committees, send us to Siberia - it can't "change our attitudes".

Maybe Smith was being less than candid. Cunliffe's <sup>version of the</sup> conditions for reunification - in his "60 myths" document, item 45 - is more plausible: a change in majority control of the leading committees.

e) But that takes us on to the way the Smith faction has prepared for this conference.

If the Smith faction is serious about reinstatement, then it must have some programme for the next steps after reinstatement: winning on the political issues, presumably, and winning an NC majority correspondingly.

Now our conference will discuss many issues of factional dispute: tasks and perspectives (the Smith faction voted against or abstained on practically every clause of the NC 'Immediate Tasks' document), Afghanistan, the South Atlantic war and imperialism. The Smith faction can't reasonably hope to get a majority on the NC without winning a majority on those questions - they can't really believe that sympathy on the expulsion issue will be sufficient to persuade the conference to vote in a leadership with politics radically opposed to the conference's own political decisions!

So what have they done about it? Nothing. They have put out lots of documents - but, in the four months since the factional crisis reached its acute stage, and indeed for many months before that, nothing about the political differences. It has all been about their organisational grievances. If readmitted they would not even have alternative resolutions on tasks and perspectives and on Afghanistan, and they would have produced nothing to defend their position on the South Atlantic war.

"How could they do documents and resolutions?", some comrades may ask. "They don't know the conference agenda". I find it impossible to believe that the Smith faction does not have sufficient contact with the WSL to have heard, one way or another, what the conference agenda is. Anyway they could simply write to us, saying that they want to know what the rest of the agenda is so that they can prepare to take part in it if readmitted.

They haven't done because they don't take reinstatement seriously - because, for them, the campaign for reinstatement is only a gambit they have to go through to keep the DCF afloat.

Moreover, the co-thinkers and friends of the Smith faction in the DCF have done a pretty poor job of preparing for the conference.

There are two serious political documents from DCF members - McInnis's IB 114 and Quelch's IB 74. But these appear to be purely individual contributions rather than DCF documents, and in any case they are not a basis for a factional slate for the NC.

The bulk of the DCF material for the conference items other than the reinstatement issue came in on the last day for amendments, Sunday 24th, most of it after a DCF conference that day. It seems to indicate that the DCF don't reckon on the rest of the conference after the reinstatement issue as anything to take seriously. For sure it doesn't add up to a convincing platform for the DCF to stand for gaining the majority on the NC, with or without an

alliance with a hypothetically reinstated Smith faction.

Cunliffe's amendment on work round the NHS is sensible and constructive. Mellor's on Irish work is serious, even if you don't agree with it. The rest is a parade of petty point-scoring and politicking - usually centred on trying to exploit some grievance or other against 'the leadership' while carefully smearing over the lack of any clear unified idea among the DCF on the issue concerned.

(as the DCF allege)

For sure, if the WSL is unclear and sectarian on the Labour Party, local government, B., and international work, then it will remain unclear and sectarian after this conference even if the DCF win every single vote!

I even hope this depressing parade may make some DCF members think again about what they have got themselves into. And if they also consider the evidence that the foundation-stone of their faction - the Smith faction's alleged wish to be reinstated in the WSL - is a fraud, then maybe some of them can find a way out of the quagmire.

Of course the Smith faction would like to win the vote on reinstatement. But the evidence - I submit - shows that they do not honestly believe that reunification (except perhaps for a brief, hectic faction fight followed by a second split) is possible; that they do not take the idea of reunification seriously; and that their appeal for reinstatement is fundamentally a gambit to prop up the DCF.

#### WHAT ARE THE CHARGES?

At the Midlands area pre-conference meeting, comrade Tim P. asked repeatedly: what are the charges against the expelled faction?

I referred him to the record. In the 'Enough is enough' resolution (IB 83), the March 10 NC indicted the Smith faction on several precise counts - finance, relation of Oxford to the national organisation, behaviour in the leading committees, etc. There are quite precise things that the Smith faction could have done to respond - see IB 122, item 17, pp.3/7-3/8 - and they did not have to 'admit guilt' in doing so. But they refused. The NC then suspended and expelled them for refusing. (See IB 99).

But that did not satisfy Tim. And it is quite true that the charges do not take the form of a detailed list of who did what, when; and that usually in a disciplinary case you would expect them to take that form.

Why is that? Out of political choice.

At any time from the 1982 summer school to April 1983, there was an open-and-shut case for breaking with the RWL - who were obviously out to split us - and expelling several members of the Morrow group as agents of the RWL. For example, they walked out of the WSL summer school debate on the Falklands/Malvinas together with the RWL.

In fact the leading committees did not even censure them or express disapproval in any way. Though some of us expressed personal opinions, we made no proposals for action by the committees.

Why? The Smith group - right up to April 1983 - was in close alliance with the Morrow group. Up to September 1982 they were in the same tendency. Up to Christmas 1982 and partly even afterwards, Smith hotly defended the RWL against those of us who condemned it.

If the committees had taken action against the Morrow group and the RWL, it would have split the WSL right down the middle. It would have been a much more messy and bloody business than our present split.

But - you may say - that was the Morrow group. We know all about them. But the Smith group is different.

No. We could have had a split on the basis of who-did-what-when charges any time between April 1983 and now, too. We chose not to.

I'll take two short periods as examples.

April 24-May 2 1983

1. At an EC meeting at the TILC session of April 24 Smith and Jones declared that they would not accept a draft WSL response to the RWL & LOR, written by Cunliffe, whether the EC voted for it or not. Carolan and I accepted the ultimatum, registered a formal protest, and never took the matter further.

2. A few minutes later, when the TILC session started and the RWL/LOR distributed an appeal to Smith and Jones to form a faction in the WSL, Smith and Jones walked out of the TILC session without any consultation at all with the other WSL delegates present.

By any formalities this was out of order. (And imagine the row if Carolan and I had walked out without consultation!) But formal reprimands, or even complaints, were the last thing in the minds of Carolan and myself. We were instead relieved and glad that Smith and Jones had finally made a decisive break with the RWL...

3. The same evening (so we later discovered) Smith and Jones did launch their faction. The constitution says: "Members wishing to form a faction must circulate a platform explaining their differences with the group's positions, signed by all members of the faction". Smith and Jones did not submit a list of members of their faction until nearly a year later (and then the list was an inaccurate one). This was not an oversight. The faction was asked repeatedly for the list - and repeatedly promised it "in the post", "next week", "tomorrow", etc. etc.

4. At the NC on May 2 the Smith group abstained on the disciplinary motion against the Morrow group, explaining that in their view the Morrow group had broken discipline but we had driven them to it.

Now it's an old and bad method of bureaucratic purges to expel some individual or small group and then tell everyone else they will be expelled unless they approve the first expulsions. But this is something different. Smith and Jones were in effect saying that breaking discipline should not be punished if the discipline-breakers were political opponents of the majority. Levy himself said at the NC that Smith and Jones had "voted against democratic centralism being applied".

October 28-29 1983 (weekend of the broad groups day school and AGM).

1. In the day school debate on the EEC - with non-members present - Smith accused me of rigging the debate.

2. There was a resolution from a non-member for the AGM on the Middle East. When the EC first discussed it, Smith said that he would not accept any decision the EC made as binding on him. We adjourned the EC, and when we reconvened he had calmed down and agreed we should support the resolution.

3. There was a resolution from non-members for the AGM attacking our line on Ireland. The EC decided, after some argument, that we should oppose it. Members of the Smith faction then spoke (vehemently) in favour of it, and Smith himself abstained on the vote.

4. Smith came to the EC with a resolution on the invasion of Grenada and said he was going to put it to the AGM whether the EC liked it or not - its line (that the invasion was basically a result of the Falklands/Malvinas war) had the authority of the September 1982 conference decision behind it!

We pointed out that that conference decision on the April-June 1982 war could not be extrapolated into a decision on the Grenada invasion 18 months later. Then, essentially, we 'negotiated' with Smith - he finally agreed not to put his resolution on condition that he could speak putting the line of that resolution.

5. Then, during the AGM, Smith approached me and said he was writing an article on the Grenada invasion (putting that same line, which was in a minority on the EC). If I did not guarantee it would go into the paper, he would raise

of the article

the issue/there and then from the AGM floor! Eventually I persuaded him to settle for an assurance that I personally would support publication of the article.

6. Immediately after the AGM we had an EC. This was the first EC since Smith had received his £8000. I asked whether we could expect a donation. Smith said that for various reasons he could not give a definite answer, and we adjourned the question. We spent months afterwards to-and-froing on the issue - discussing problems with social security and so on - but we might as well have saved our time and energy. Eventually Smith informed<sup>us</sup> that even if all the problems with social security were cleared up, the League would not get a penny. He needed it all for personal use.

Now there is no constitutional requirement for members to make donations if they receive such large sums. But, especially in the case of an EC member, we surely think it is a bit out of order if they don't.

Yet we made no sort of formal complaint, not even the mildest. Nor did we on any of the other issues. (We did ask Smith to explain his abstention on Ireland. But when he did so, not to our satisfaction, we left it there).

Those two periods were, I suppose, high points. But they were essentially typical. The list of incidents could be stretched out to dozens or scores.

They were all petty, not grounds for expulsion? Maybe. But some were not so petty. Take the case of the union laws campaign, for example. At the June 1983 NC we decided to revive it. Smith volunteered for the job. He never did it. He was constantly reminded, and constantly said he would get round to it, but never did. Eventually, when the NGA dispute arrived - at which time a revived campaign would have been really useful to us - Smith declared that he had not done the job... not because of lack of time, or because he felt not up to the job, but because he disagreed with the project.

It was quite a serious blow to our work. But even then we made no complaint. We just said that it was water under the bridge, and asked if he could undertake it now. Yes he could, he said. No, he didn't do it.

Now suppose we had not been conciliatory on such matters. Suppose we had gone in for formal complaints, censures and reprimands. I can see no good reason to doubt that conflict would quickly have escalated into a split.

But what all the details add up to is that from May 1982, increasingly, the situation inside the organisation was more one of a war of nerves between two distinct groups than any normal internal life. The fusion had been partly broken apart again.

The decision to be taken about all the incidents, then, was not essentially a constitutional, 'legal' one, but a political one. Did we want to go for a split or did we want to try to save the fusion?

<sup>we</sup>  
We tried to save the fusion. That's why/were conciliatory. (To be honest, I guess there was also a less noble motive - sheer weariness and disgust. We preferred to let things go for the sake of peace and quiet. However, we never got the peace and quiet).

What has changed now is that we think there is no longer any chance of saving the fusion.

We could pick the last dozen or so incidents of the type above and base ourselves on those 'charges'. It might look better to the constitutionalists. But politically it would be dishonest, misleading and mystifying.

There is nothing very new about the incidents. What is new is the 'transformation from quantity into quality' in the separation and breakdown of relations between the two groups in the WSL.

It would<sup>be</sup>/stupid, demoralising and degrading to carry out the split on the basis of petty who-did-what-when arguments about particular incidents. Instead, we have based ourselves on the fundamental political facts.

We do not ask anyone to take our word about the 11 incidents listed above, or any other of the dozens of incidents that could be cited. We ask comrades to take a stand on the basis of these fundamental political facts.

1. The fusion has broken down. I do not know anyone seriously involved in the national life of the organisation who denies this.

2. The breakdown cannot be healed. The Smith faction had<sup>all</sup> the normal rights of a minority - right to argue their views in the IB and in internal meetings, right to participate normally in the work of the organisation, right to form a faction. In addition they had privileges on top - overrepresentation on the EC and OSC and in central jobs, extensive access to the public press for their factional polemics, and a disproportionate share of the public speaking jobs of the organisation, etc. But they were not satisfied. In other words, they are not prepared to accept the status of a minority. But the support for their politics within the organisation does not entitle them to be any more than a minority.

3. A split was therefore inevitable, sooner rather than later.

On the basis of these three basic facts, comrades should decide which side of the split they want to be on, and vote accordingly.

The NC's case can be replied to by saying that the WSL's politics are indeed as rotten as the Smith group says they are, and therefore that the Smith group were right to act as destructively as they did; or by producing some convincing formula for reunification. But the comrades who make no response to the basic points above, and instead talk exclusively about constitutional procedures and standing orders, are not only (as it happens) wrong on the constitutionalities, but way off-beam politically. They are letting secondary issues cloud over primary issues - indeed, issues of life or death (or at least grave injury) to the organisation.

We emphasised in IB 105: "Only in form is this an expulsion. In essence it is simply recognition and resolution of a situation which has been a fact for some time - that there were two distinct organisations inside the shell of the WSL".