

Articles by Kinnell

Some comments on the Quelch and McInnis documents ..... p.1

Why discuss the Falklands/Malvinas? ..... 4

Some comments on Mellor's amendment on international work .. 5

Why not have the full Smith faction present for the appeal?. 5

Does the Smith faction want to be reinstated? ..... 6

'What are the charges?' ..... p.9

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 I don't think the document can simply be voted for by the conference now - partly because it is obviously out of date, and partly because I think some of the ideas in it are wrong.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 sidestepping 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!