

Internal Bulletin 129 March 1985

NC minutes Dec. 1984

Miners' strike
Labour Party
Building the organisation

NC/OM Feb. 2-3 1985

Miners' strike
General strike
Finance
Youth
Women's Fightback

Documents:

YOUTH WORK - Joplin
WOMEN'S FIGHTBACK - Leicester

Paper sales

'The politics of selling papers', by Kinnell

'Goodbye to all that'

by French

'Class Fighter'

by Mark (York)

Next NC/OM
March 30-31

NC/Org. Meeting Feb. 2-3

Present: Casey, Ellis, Jagger, Joplin, Kinnell, Leicester, O'Connor, Picton, Weightman.
Late (with apologies): Carolan, French, Hill, Matthews, Parkinson, Scott.
Apologies: Collins, Lewis, Potter, Whettling.
Absent: Fraser, Strummer.

I. ATTENDANCE

Jagger: moved his resolution.

"Late attendance at nationally organised meetings - NCs, delegate meetings, cadre schools, is becoming a serious problem. Punctual comrades are inconvenienced and agenda timings become impossible to keep to.

The NC resolves to tackle this problem - starting with its own members and fighting for a change in attitude throughout the organisation.

The NC instructs the EC to organise a system of fines for lateness without justifiable cause which will be sufficiently punitive to discourage lateness and from which no member will be excluded."

Kinnell: I support this, but we should recognize that fines alone won't do it.

Carried unanimously

2. MINERS' STRIKE

Hill: The government are going for a hard line to smash the NUM. If they weren't doing that, there would have been a settlement in the last week. There are real divisions in government ranks, but they are using them to demoralise the strikers by on-off tactics.

This also makes it very difficult for the NUM right-wing to break ranks - though it is clear that the CP, etc., would like a settlement. Morning Star says that because of their great struggle the miners have now won a victory whatever the settlement!

NUM now very much on the defensive: strike is declining. But to what extent? Irreversibly? It's difficult to tell, especially because we lack full information. Significant numbers are going back, though NCB figures are exaggerated. There is a danger of a 'domino effect' biting into Yorkshire & the NE

Strong feeling among strikers about 'economic closures' and reinstatements - that they won't concede on those issues.

Strike is not over, despite what Socialist Worker says. The end may not even come very rapidly. We must insist that the strike can still be won - if the core stays solid, and if there is some sort of second front.

The railworkers are still quite strong. So is seafarers solidarity. There is even quite a lot of solidarity in power stations. And there are a lot of claims/pay coming up.

February 11th: signs are not good, though there is some activity in the South East.

WRP are calling for a general strike from March 6th. Its attractive but fantastically schematic.

The Miners Defence Committee conference can be useful - though size will be affected by the negotiations. Looks like 5-600 delegates.

Feb 24th demo: we should support it, but its likely to be a flop.

Slogans? No decisive change in relation to General Strike and recall TUC. Settlement? our attitude? Different from what it would be for other unions: NUM leaders have led a serious struggle. We should level accusations of 'sell-out' against the TUC, not against the NUM leaders.

Effect of an NUM defeat? Obviously a major shift in the balance of class forces. We also have to think about effects on ourselves. We've turned very heavily towards strike, and will have to combat demoralisation after any defeat. We need to step up recruitment activity, increase our profile. We plan to produce a pamphlet on the miners' strike.

Carolyn: Monday Feb 4th is going to be very important. If there's a big surge back to work then, then we're in serious trouble. We can't assist defeatism in any way, but we must also make cold assessments. Prepare the organisation for the effects of a defeat. Maybe we could set up a series of meetings on "Lessons of the miners' strike."

Scott: Signs are indeed bad, though that is not yet a collapse. We must say that unless there is solidarity the strike will be defeated. We've kept on promising power cuts, and they've not happened.

Main criticism should be against the TUC & LP leadership, not against NUM leadership. Should draw out lesson of need for a rank and file movement.

Kinnell: The strike is not over, but here we should discuss candidly the issues raised by an eventual compromise settlement. There are now good reasons for the NUM leadership to go for a compromise settlement with a view to preserving the fabric of the NUM. If they go for a reasonable compromise we should not attack them as sell-outs - even if (as will inevitably be the case) some of the most militant strikers do so attack them. We should not support resolutions at the MDC conference which call for the NUM to make no compromise. Because of the nature of the main leaders of the trade unions we are used to regarding almost any compromise as a sell-out: but compare the Trotskyists in Minneapolis 1934 or Trotsky 1905.

Carolyn: What effect of NACODS moves? Could this help the NUM? Now the dispute is about smashing the NUM - plainly - and that could make the NACODS worm turn.

Problem for us if there is a defeat? cf RCP in the 1940s. It collapsed as militancy declined - but it didn't collapse in the regions, but at the top. If the NC holds firm, then we can rally the organisation.

Matthews: It would be better to end the strike with no agreement than to agree to economic closures. NUM has failed to cash in on support NUM has made appeals for solidarity action - yes! - but it hasn't organised solidarity action. Also even a defeat for the NUM won't necessarily mean total disaster for the labour movement.

French: Cdes are painting too pessimistic a picture. Feb 11th could turn the situation. We've told people this is a watershed - but maybe not, including because people have not seen the NUM's as their struggle. Don't think organisation'll suffer v bad effects

Hill: NACODS action? Very unlikely. They're not being asked to cross picket lines. Settlement - Kinnell is right to put it starkly - but there are other possibilities e.g. a compromise imposed against Scargill. We might end up backing Scargill against such a compromise. We'll judge it concretely as it happens.

Problem for the organisation if the miners are defeated? No one suggested we would collapse! But a defeat will have effects on us as on the whole class and the whole movement.

French is wrong: if the rest of the labour movement has not seen the miners fight as their fight, that will make any defeat worse. Defeat without a fight is the worst sort of defeat.

Casey: moved resolution from Glasgow.

"Solidarity with the miners is at a low level; in a number of unions/CLPs/support groups the perspective for solidarity work does not go beyond food/financial support; even at that level only limited numbers are involved in such work; this is not always because of bureaucratic machinations.

2. The NUM leadership is no longer divided just along broadly left/right lines; the 'Left' itself is divided; e.g. the opposition of those influenced by the CP to general strike slogan, non-NUM members on picket lines, the MDC, and their pleading for a negotiated settlement.

3. Scargill's refusal to compromise and his calls for generalised industrial solidarity action have played a positive role in the dispute; they still do; but they are not enough to win the dispute.

4. We should not pin our hopes of a victory for the miners on power cuts; coverage of this issue in the paper often at least appears to do so; (though this is not to deny the importance of picketing power stations, implementation of BTUC resolutions etc).

In such a situation, we should therefore:

a) give more emphasis to the need for generalised struggle around the issues posed by the miners strike; e.g. cut hours not jobs, sliding scale of hours, workers' control of hiring & firing, work-sharing with no loss of pay, workers control and management (see also 2.12.84 conference broadsheet)

b) continue to argue the need for general strike action in solidarity with the miners and to smash the anti-union laws; but also argue the need for general strike action in pursuit of such demands as those listed above.

c) argue for such an approach clearly and consistently in the paper etc; refrain from further obscurantist centre-page reprints e.g. Belfast 1919.

d) demand and campaign for Scargill and the NUM to officially back the Mineworkers Defence Committee; this would not only strengthen the MDC; it would also give a material force to Scargill's calls for general strike action.

e) intervene in the MDC around points a/b/d; and set up local MDC groups where none exist.

f) drastically improve local coverage of the strike in the paper; it is a national strike, not a Nottinghamshire one; branches in mining areas should send in weekly reports; branches in non-mining areas should send in at least fortnightly reports on local solidarity work.

g) organise branch/area educationals on the Transitional Programme and its method & its application in miners' strike.

Points e/f/g should be monitored by the centre.

Carolán: replied for EC. (a) Of course we make propaganda for workers' control etc; but to propose these as immediate demands of the strike now - or (b) of a general strike - is to try to jump over our heads. (c) What's obscurantist about Belfast 1919? (d) The NUM is giving support to the MDC. There is nothing to be gained except propaganda point-scoring by demanding that it gives louder support. (f) It's a fair point that coverage from outside Notts is poor, but there is a problem: most of the articles we get from outside Notts tend to be horror stories about how the CP is sabotaging support work. (g) Transitional Programme? Yes, education on the Transitional Programme is a good idea. But if it is held that our politics on the miners' strike don't correspond to the method of the Transitional Programme, then it should be said specifically.

Hill: The NUM leadership has not been fighting for a 4-day week. We argued that they should. To suddenly demand now that they fight for it would be sectarian.

MDC? NUM leadership says nationally it will support any solidarity activity.e.g. they've sent letters & speakers to MDC MDC local groups - very good work in Scotland, but elsewhere good miners' support committees exist and there's no point in parallel MDC groups.

Reports - trouble is that they've not come in - except articles saying how bad the CP is locally.

Scott: I agree about demands of the strike now. But we do need to say that demands like work-sharing should have been raised by NUM leadership.

Casey: I agree with Hill in the assessment of the strike now. But we should also discuss how to avoid defeat. Basic answer is solidarity action. That requires raising wider demands like work sharing etc to win support for a general strike etc.

Belfast 1919 series? What was its purpose? NUM & MDC ? It's important. In Glasgow MDC delegates have been excluded from Trades Council support committee on the grounds that the NUM does not back MDC. Transitional Programme? It should be a basic part of education.

Voting

- a) falls
- b) falls (on the grounds that we can't pose workers' control etc as immediate demands now of a general strike)
- c) falls
- d) falls
- e) falls
- f) carried
- g) carry over to discussion in educationals, later in NC

GENERAL STRIKE

Kinnell: reported from EC. Whettling had argued against general strike slogan (see his letter in paper No213). EC was unanimously against Whettling's argument. What did NC think?

Weightman: We should have more historical material in the paper.

Scott: Whettling is wrong to identify general strike as irrelevant or relevant depending on whether people respond immediately. Trotsky argued in 'Discussions on the TP' that we should raise necessary slogans whether they get a response or not.

Carolán: The question of a response is material. Point is that a general strike is needed very immediately now; but we adapt the way we say it. We don't always have it as a leading slogan. Look back at 1973 when we got mesmerised by the general strike slogan.

FINANCE

Kinnell: moved two resolutions from the EC:

12

Papers " The EC:

- a) Notes that our average monthly expenditure is some £200 or £250 above our normal monthly income, because of the failure of the latest dues increase to yield as much extra revenue as expected;
- b) concludes that - in order to avoid repeated and eventually disastrous financial crises - some definite measures must be taken to balance the budget.

Efforts to get increased dues contributions from individual members; to recruit; to get donations from regular readers and to increase our commercial work, can all help, but must be underpinned by some action with certain and calculable results to reduce expenditure or increase income.

The alternatives are: some form of cutback on the paper, or an increase in paper sales.

- c) Our financial turnover at present is smaller in proportion to membership(if the figures are corrected for inflation) than it has ever been before. Membership and paper sales are increasing. An increase in paper sales is necessary politically - aside from all financial considerations - and has been proved to be possible.

- d) The EC therefore resolves to campaign to solve the financial problems by an increase in paper sales.

- e) This resolution will be circulated to all branches, and they they will be asked to discuss it together with the checklist on paper sales already produced. The NC on February 2 will be asked to vote between the different possible ways of balancing our budget.

- f) The specific proposal to go to the NC will be an increase in the standard pledged paper sale to 12.

Students purposes

"For financial ~~xxxxxxx~~ the organisation has generally tended to treat students like unemployed comrades. This should be changed: they should be treated as waged people on a low wage. Specifically, they will be asked to pay dues at £5 per month minimum. They should be asked to pay these dues in three instalments of £20 each when they receive their grants. This will supercede the present 'student levy'. Exceptions can of course be made for individual students who do not get a grant."

O'Connor: moved an amendment from Manchester to the '12 papers' resolution: "The quota for unemployed comrades should remain at 10."

Unemployed comrades don't have access to workplace sales. Doing extra sales costs them money. So does political activity generally. And unemployed comrades sell many of their papers at 10p.

Carolán: Branch could raise finance to help unemployed comrades with fares. Or the centre could give a discount on paper money in order to help finance sales.

Scott: There are big openings for sales for unemployed comrades.

Weightman: Low sales are often due to idleness: our experience is that when comrades go at it vigorously, they can get good sales.

Kinnell proposed an addition to the "12 papers" resolution.

"Where necessary, branches should establish funds to help unemployed comrades with fares for political activity. Branches with a particularly large number of unemployed comrades should approach the centre to negotiate specific subsidies to cover specific estate sales, etc.

The NC also notes that comrades who regularly sell any number of papers at 10p will on notifying the centre be charged only 10p for these papers."

The Manchester amendment was then withdrawn. "12 papers" resolution carried with the above addition. "Student contributions" resolution carried.

YOUTH

Joplin introduced her document (published in this IB)

The majority of our comrades are youth. So our youth also do much of our general labour movement work.

Where YS is central to our work, the YS has been very active during miners' strike. Elsewhere not. There is a problem of idleness and sluggishness.

We have got some base among students now. We should conserve that but also turn to FE. We can use area NUSS to do that, and it can give us an avenue of work round YTS. This will have to be very high-profile, activist work.

CF? We'll need it; can't accommodate such work in SO. So we should do CF as an A4 publication.

This turn? An enormous effort. But it seems the only way forward for youth work.

Casey proposed a resolution from Glasgow.

"The branch notes with concern the appearance in paper No.212 of a shoddy 'do-it-yourself' version of CF. In addition to the bad impression made by this particular issue of CF, we note that in general terms there is no good reason for its continued production. We believe that (a) either CF is a 'youth' version of the paper - in which case it is superfluous; (b) or CF is conceived of as the newspaper of a (presently non-existent) mass campaigning socialist youth movement - in which case it is substitutionist.

We would therefore urge that production of CF cease forthwith and instead we help produce/initiate locally-based youth bulletins whose purpose should be to recruit youth, on an anti-Labour-Establishment basis, to the J.

Agreed: NC vote in principle - unanimous

Referred to branches for further discussion.

GLASGOW RESOLUTION

Casey: Last CF was not useful. CF generally is infrequent, has no clear function.

Carolani: Tone is angry & inappropriate. The latest issue of CF was not shoddy. Local bulletins? What does this mean?

Ellis: Extremely unfair criticism of CF. It was a very good issue. But obviously a lot of people are unhappy with CF. We must revitalise CF. A lot of comrades just react negatively to the problems.

O'Connor: Does CF have any real existence? It's just a SO youth paper - we often have to get people into SO in order to get them into CF. Why not integrate youth coverage into SO? And perhaps have occasional SO youth specials.

Joplin: A lot of youth cdes haven't really been part of our discussion on youth work. Last CF I thought was quite good. It should for sure be sold. We should do CF as a youth bulletin, which is a separate function from SO. Local youth bulletins? OK, but we should not be dragged along with IMG's scheme.

Glasgow resolution fell, with O'Connor voting for.

WOMEN'S FIGHTBACK

Leicester: presented her report (published separately). We've gained a lot of contacts, but with little central direction. Day school was really important to pull the work together, and was very good.

Last NC decided SO women must join WF and go to the day school. They didn't. We can't just pass resolutions - we need to do more to increase women's involvement in WF - eg schools, branch discussions.

What now for the movement? Women Against Pit Closures (WAPC)? LP women's sections? WF as a pit women's paper? We can do all three, indeed we have started doing all three.

Hill: National women's demo March 9 is very important. Re NC decision on SO women attending WF school - problem is that the NC doesn't fight for its decisions.

WAPC after the strike? We should raise ideas for its political basis as a continuing movement. What about WAPC having a formal relation to the NUM? It's a popular demand.

Scott: SO women are not doing WF work. Why not?

Jagger: WF became desultory. Branches stopped discussing it. Also problems with producing WF. We need a paper team for it.

Joplin: Technical problems of paper are secondary. Relation of Working Class Women's Movement to LP? If WAPC groups are not part of NUM, should they not be LP women's sections?

Carolyn: WF started out big, but never created organisational core. Then was chewed up by a big faction fight. Should get WF support groups. Not the same as a Mass Working Class-based Women's Movement - immediately we'd have small groups. Maybe we could organise WF meetings in all areas.

Parkinson: The paper is the lynch-pin. Problem with SO women - they're not doing specific women's work at all. It seems to be part of a general decline of the women's movement. WF needs to root itself in WAPC. What's happened about MDC women's section? We need to relate more to women in industrial disputes, eg Barking. It is important to improve technical side of paper - release energies.

O'Connor: SO women feel they don't know what's happening, eg women's commission does not function. Need more women's coverage in SO.

Joplin: Make WF the paper of the pit women? Yes. But we have to be careful - otherwise we'll put them off.

Carolyn: WF has had small results so far. We don't just publish WF for the sake of producing a paper. We need to think about recruiting. If we get functioning WF groups at price of sacrificing paper, OK.

Kinnell: We need a bold turn to the pit women - and a bold drive to capitalise organisationally on our great potential credit with them.
Set up WF groups? I'm not sure. Isn't it more a matter of getting existing women's groups affiliated to WF?

Hill: Joplin's point is that if WAPC does not have a long term perspective then it's best to join LP women's sections. But you can't short-cut the process. A lot depends on the outcome of the strike.

In the LP WF has lost out to WAC. But WAC now has problems politically. WF can and should make up lost ground.

Get pit women onto the EB? Yes, though there are problems.

Parkinson: WF failed in the LP by not pushing sufficiently a turn outwards. WAC is still quite feeble: WF can make up lost ground.

WF meetings locally? I don't think so. We don't have a sufficient base. We have to build on existing groups.

Leicester: Good idea to involve pit women in WF. Maybe we should have a bulletin instead of the paper.

WF groups vs existing groups? I think we need independent WF. In some pit villages it would make sense to have a WF group alongside the women's action group.

Carolan: Motion to have WF meetings in every area.

Kinnell: Amendent: add to the document that we should consider the possibility of replacing WF paper by a bulletin for a period, if that helps to involve pit women.

Hill: Co-opt pit women to WF EB.

All agreed

Carolan: We should try to organise WF meetings in all areas.

Carried 2 against

EC MINUTES/etc

Conference: Date decided: June 22-23. Pre-conf period after Easter.

School: Date decided : August 23-26.

Reading list: A basic reading list was decided: Transitional Programme to be added to EC's list.

MDC

Hill gave a brief report on the main issues: election of the committee, general strike etc.

Next NC/OM: March 30/31st 11.45AM.

MINERS' STRIKE WORK

Entwhistle reported positive experience with "civil servants' miners' support group" in his area. Agreed that we should seek more workplace/trade union miners' support groups. In some cases they may be the basis for LP workplace branches after the strike.

LABOUR PARTY

Regional Conferences

Scotland: March 9-10: LCC move against LPYS autonomy; militant resolution on miners' strike likely to be composited out of existence.

East Midlands: March 16-17: good resolution on miners coming up.

North West : March 9-10: main debate on local government.

Leadership

Anti-Kinnock resolutions defeated in Glasgow; passed in Nottingham East; heavily watered down in Sheffield; passed in Islington; not yet come up in Lambeth, East London; not passed in Stoke.

EDUCATIONALS

Manchester: series planned.

Stoke : programme of branch educationals in progress.

S London : programme of fortnightly branch educationals in progress.

Nottingham: discussion series.

Sheffield : good discussions got from local meetings on off-beat topics like 'Should boxing be banned?', 'Should pornography be banned?', 'Animal liberation', etc.

Glasgow : discussion series at branch meetings, also smaller-group educationals planned with new comrades.

E London : speakers to be sent from South London.

Islington : reasonable attendances at local discussion meetings, but no systematic education programme.

RECRUITMENT

New supporters reported from Nottingham, Manchester, Sheffield, Glasgow, East London, Stoke.

Possible forthcoming new supporters reported from Nottingham, Manchester, Sheffield, Glasgow, East London, Stoke.

YOUTH WORK

Joplin. 28.1.85

Since the RWL people left, CF has not had much life about it. There is nothing to recruit people to. We still function as CF at YS events. Most people know CF as SO youth.

Most branches, with the exceptions of Islington, Basingstoke, Nottingham and Cardiff, are heavily dominated by youth. Those youth do not just do YS and student work, but are the mainstay of our entire labour movement work.

In most cases, with a few exceptions, the YSs are pretty routinist.

The student work is still developing. SSIN is getting well known, though still too much as an SO front. It's quite likely, though not certain, that Simon P will be elected onto NUS executive this Easter.

We have a very significant input into 10 or so colleges. In the north east (TANUS), North Yorkshire (NYANUS), and Manchester (MANUS), we are in a position to make the decisions in the Area NUSs if we play our cards right in the next few months.

One of the reasons why YS work is only ticking over is the miners' strike.

We looked for a 'youth angle' a la IMG and couldn't find one, and so gave up. Obviously there are things that youth can do as youth in the strike - discos, collections at youthful places and so on, and by and large branches which do YS work are doing them.

Another is the loss of 'middle cadre' with the Oxford split. Younger comrades are now being required to 'move up' the organisation and take on more responsibilities.

But what seems decisive is that YS work is directionless.

Now it makes sense to use the base we have in Labour Clubs and student unions to build our YS work.

Area NUSs link up universities and polys with techs. We are strong in universities and more or less non-existent in the other sectors. We should use Areas to get to techs.

When YTS started, we were the only group which had a clue what was going on.

We started off well, were knocked back by a few defeats and confusions - and then with the miners' strike most YTS work stopped.

Now YTS is likely to be compulsory. And there are going to be lots of very pissed-off youth forced onto schemes.

Where we have the possibility to get into Mode A or B1 schemes through union branches or monitoring projects, then we should.

But in fact we stand the best chance of getting constant contact with trainees through Further Education colleges. (Some schemes, B2s, are entirely in FEs. Both As and B1s send some trainees to FEs).

So the best bet for linking up our YS work is through YTS work in techs.

It will involve more or less everyone, to one degree or another.

We will need:

1. At least one comrade on NUS Area Committee, who will make contacts with the FE organisers and try to get responsibility for YTS.
2. Unemployed youth to go on a scheme, or if they're too old, then into the

Youth work/2

targeted college and become not a floating lefty but a serious student.

3. A YS which can draw YTS and tech students into political activity immediately. And that activity will have to be very lively - pickets, lobbies, discos, leafleting, trips, die-ins, etc.

4. Where we have supporters on councils, their job will be to function as champions of YTS and FE rights - figureheads to relate to.

With all that, or a combination of a couple of factors, we will be able to get into the colleges and look towards organising the trainees as youth, as students and in most cases as young trade unionists.

The precise details of how to involve a university or poly Labour Club or a trade union branch will depend on the area; so will demands on councillors.

But for sure the main thing will be the same everywhere: we will need a turn in the organisation towards outgoing campaigning work ('Wiganisation').

CF will have to exist for the 'turn' to be a success. Probably not as a real, independent organisation, but as the monthly bulletin/supplement of SO youth.

Instead of being SO made easy, it should be a lively news-carrying magazine. A4 format, duplicated, with space for area/regional/local reports - selling for 10p or 15p it will cost about £40 to run off and need 270 to 400 sales to break even - we can do that. Every branch will have to appoint a CF treasurer and paper organiser, responsible to Tim A. at the centre.

The name must remain the same, but it should be clearly the SO youth magazine. We will recruit people to the YS then as SO/CF sellers, and then, for now, into SO. If a real youth group is possible in the future then we'll reassess it.

While this does seem to be the best option open to us, there are problems. We are not very good at working out a medium-term strategy (a couple of years will be necessary) and sticking to it.

Nor are we very good at breaking out of our routines to take on what will be a very major new area of work.

But it does seem the obvious thing to do, and I think we should give it a try.

Women's Fightback

Leicester. 29.1.85

Despite being very disorganised for some time WF has managed to make some impact in certain areas during the miners' strike, in Notts and in Staffs. In other areas the paper is distributed and goes down well.

In Notts, earlier on in the strike, WF produced a fortnightly women's strike bulletin which was distributed to about 8 or 9 welfares in North Notts. It gave us some useful contacts with women in those areas and, for example, gave us the opportunity to be in on an occupation of a village hall in Welbeck mining village. The bulletin stopped after about 3 months due to lack of organisation and shortage of people who could do it. Attempts were made to resurrect it, but to no avail. Many contacts have been lost since, especially in Welbeck and some other areas. The paper is still well received in other areas, however.

In North Staffs WF, through the SO women in Stoke on Trent, has had a lot of input into both the local women's action group and through them to the national Women Against Pit Closures.

Throughout the strike WF has called for a joining up of the Women Against Pit Closures groups, and for the linking of them with other working class women's struggles into a working class women's movement. This has had a good reception because it is what most pit women call for themselves, in less political language and with less idea of how to achieve it: "We're not going back into the home when this is over", "More battles to be won", etc.

The work done by our women in North Staffs has been the most useful in this respect, by working consistently with the action groups, including rolling sleeves up in the kitchens etc., and gaining respect. They have argued that the national Women Against Pit Closures is undemocratic and should be widened out. At the moment the national committee only allows one delegate per area. That delegate is often undemocratically chosen and report-backs rarely get through to women on the ground. The women in North Staffs have been calling for delegates to go from every action group or kitchen. They also call for national committee to widen out to other women and to begin plans for continuing as a women's group after the strike. As far as I know this is the area which has had the most consistent input of this kind.

The work done until now culminated in the day school in Stoke on Trent on January 19. Over 100 women were there, and 8 different pits were represented, from North Notts, South Yorkshire and North Staffs.

This did manage to bring some of our contacts together, though many of the pit women who came were new contacts, and two women who have joined WF we have never seen before. The day went very well, and we are now planning another school in Ollerton welfare, Notts. Some of the women also joined the Labour Party and seem receptive to setting up women's sections in their areas or joining ones that exist, e.g. Ollerton and Tuxford.

The big problem seems to be not getting pit women to our meetings, but SO women. Only 7 or 8 were at the day school, and only 5 at the general committee meeting the next day. This despite an NC decision that all SO women should go and should join WF. This has still not happened. Passing resolutions at NCs does not seem to be the answer to our lack of involvement in WF. Women will not travel across the country to things they think will be disorganised or a flop. Few women come to the women's commissions that are held, though there has not been one now for some time.

What should happen is that women should go round the branches, not to discuss women's liberation in an abstract way but to talk about the branch's work as regards women and about recruitment of women. Some steps have been made in this direction already. York, Manchester, and Stoke, and possibly Basingstoke, have said they would arrange such branch meetings for us to attend.

attend.

The next things for SO women to concentrate on are the Ollerton day school and the LP women's conference. It was agreed at the general committee meeting that we would arrange a fringe meeting at the LP women's conference - as many women as possible to get delegated, 4 model resolutions to go round WF groups and women's sections on Women Against Pit Closures, Ireland, deportations/immigration controls and the new DHSS laws. This needs to be discussed at all branches.

As for the paper, efforts are being made to make it much better organised in terms of getting printing, typesetting etc done on time, but the biggest problem is money. Every month we make the paper, we are not sure we will have enough to send it to the printers with. Until SO women start selling the paper and joining WF, with standing orders coming in, there is not much we can do about it. Many of our papers are given away to pit women.

Therefore we need:

- A. All branches to arrange a WF speaker to discuss their work.
- B. All SO women to get delegated to LP women's conference (June 15-16)
- C. All SO women to join WF
- D. All SO women to come to the Ollerton day school
- E. To incorporate into the programme of schools and education, all-women schools, to discuss not only basic education but work around women.

In terms of building a mass working class women's movement from the work we have done during the miners' strike, we have 3 possibilities:

- A. Building the national Women Against Pit Closures;
- B. Building Labour Party women's sections with our contacts;
- C. Offering the WF paper as a pit women's paper, or printing a separate bulletin.

All of these are important, and none necessarily rules out the others. But the most immediate one in my opinion is C: offering the paper for the women themselves to use. This has already been done to a small extent. It was said at the WF day school. At the Ollerton day school we should hold a workshop on the working class women's movement and the paper, proposing that WF becomes the paper of the strike women.

The work of the Stoke women around democratising the Women Against Pit Closures national committee should continue. One of the things to come out of the Women Against Pit Closures workshop at Stoke on Trent was that the North Staffs pit women would draw up a model resolution to be sent from the other pits. This needs to be followed up, and WF could be very useful in doing this.

As for building LP women's sections, some of the pit women joined the Labour Party at the day school and since, and seem interested in joining women's sections. This should be the subject of another workshop at Ollerton.

THE POLITICS OF SELLING PAPERS

Kinnell

13.10.84

1. FINANCIAL AND POLITICAL ARGUMENTS

At present each copy of the paper we sell costs about 40p to produce. That's counting only direct production costs - printing, typesetting paper, darkroom supplies, photographers' bills, etc. - and dispatch costs, not overheads like phone bills, wages, electricity, etc.

To produce one extra copy of the paper costs about 2p. Thus we make a profit of 23p on each extra paper sold, or 8p if it is sold at 10p.

If we sold 600 extra papers each week, then - supposing half were sold at 25p and half at 10p - we would be £100 per week better off. It would transform our financial situation.

Yes - but can it be done? What about the cost of doing it in terms of diverting resources from other political work?

I think it can be done. In fact, we can increase sales much more than that. It would not be harmful to our political work - quite the contrary. Indeed, the political arguments for increasing paper sales are much more important than the financial ones.

There might be an alternative answer to our financial problems, though I can't think of one off hand. There is no alternative politically to increasing sales.

2. OUR SALES ARE ABNORMALLY LOW

Most comrades pledge six or ten papers per week, and very often they sell a lot fewer than that.

I think that almost everyone could very easily sell a lot more than six or ten.

Take the case of a comrade who is in work (or at college), and who goes to two political meetings a week other than our own internal meetings.

One copy for himself/herself	1
Sales at work	2 or 3
Contacts who have the paper delivered regularly .	2 or 3
A public sale (estate sale or street sale)	3 or 4
Sales at two meetings a week	4 or 5
Total	12 to 16.

That, it seems, to me, is a reasonable average minimum weekly schedule. Anyone who carries on any sort of political activity at their workplace can find two or three people who will buy the paper, even if only out of politeness. Any local group can find at least two or three contacts for each member within easy distance of his or her home. The schedule above leaves four evenings a week free (assuming one internal meeting a week), or at least, free bar an hour spent doing an estate sale or dropping off papers to contacts. It also leaves the whole weekend free, bar maybe an hour on a public sale. It is not very hectic.

Of course, some comrades will have special problems. Maybe they have a job where they work on their own and have very little chance to do political activity at work, even at the level of talking politics to other workers. Maybe they have heavy child-care responsibilities and cannot get out even two evenings a week.

But most of our comrades don't have such jobs and don't have such respon-

sibilities. A lot of them should be able to sell many more than the 12 to 16 listed above.

I've estimated two or three sales for a political meeting, but there are plenty of political meetings where you can sell 10 or 20. A lot of comrades go to more than two meetings a week. A large workplace, with a fair level of political activity and good opportunities to get round and see people, can provide a lot more than 2 or 3 sales a week.

Unemployed comrades, or student comrades, who have more free time, can do more regular deliveries to contacts and more public sales. They can easily sell 20-plus papers per week.

Easier said than done? Not really. I think our first problem is the psychological problem - to 'say' to ourselves that, instead of maybe 3 or 4 per week being an average sale per comrade, the average can be 12 to 16, with more active comrades selling 20 or 30. Having 'said' it and convinced ourselves, doing it is relatively easy.

Over the last few months, I've been keeping a tally of how many papers I sell each week. It has varied from a low of 11 to a high of 31. That is not the result of exceptional skill at paper-selling, nor of exceptional effort. Spending most of my time on office work at the centre, I have far fewer openings for sales than the average SO supporter. I have maybe three or four hours a week free for local activity in which I can sell papers. Comrades whose main political work is local activity should be able to give more than three or four hours to it - and, correspondingly, to sell more than 11 to 31 papers.

It's not pie in the sky. No special or bizarre effort is needed to raise our sales dramatically. Rather, there are special and bizarre features of our present pattern of activity which make our sales abnormally low.

In the early '70s, some of us sold a paper called Workers' Fight. It was fortnightly until early 1974, but in practice you cannot sell many more of a fortnightly than of a weekly. There were two of us in Stoke, and we sold about 130 copies per issue. There were maybe 10 comrades in Manchester, and they took 500 copies per issue. None of this was done by back-breaking, hectic activity, or by having paper-selling overwhelm all other activity as with Workers' Press in those days. We could sell at the same rate today.

3. WHY SALES ARE LOW

If it's so easy, then why aren't we selling more already?

The answer, I think, is that most comrades simply do not offer the paper for sale often enough. You cannot sell papers unless you ask people to buy them. And most comrades do not ask many people to buy the paper.

Time and again, when I go to meetings where other comrades are present, I find that they do not have papers with them, or, if they do, that they do not ask people to buy them. No wonder they don't sell many papers.

A lot of comrades do not even try to sell the paper at work. Generally, selling the paper has become an optional extra item in their political activity.

This is bad financially, but much worse politically. We have two basic ways of getting our ideas across - which is what we are in business to do - talking to people, and selling them the paper. If you can get someone into conversation about politics (in the full sense, i.e. about changing the world), then nine times out of ten you can get them to buy a paper. If comrades are selling very few papers, then for sure they are talking to very few people about changing the world.

To be busy with political meetings every evening is not necessarily to be

highly active politically. The day-to-day round of the Labour Party and trade unions is a round of often petty issues, sometimes fought over vehemently, but only distantly connected to changing the world. That is why programmes like the Alternative Economic Strategy can continue to command the passive support of most labour movement activists. Those activists very rarely discuss ideas about changing the world.

Now we have to relate to that petty round of day-to-day issues, because the existing labour movement is the only labour movement there is - the only raw material we've got to work with. But our basic motivating idea is that the labour movement needs to be shaken out of its pettiness and geared to a strategy for changing the world, or ultimately it will be helpless. Relating to the day-to-day issues is for us, fundamentally, a tactical means to the end of getting across the ideas expressed in the paper.

Our low paper sales are - I think - an unintended and unnecessary result of our efforts over recent years to integrate ourselves more into the official labour movement. In the early '70s, our basic routine was such that even the most dim and idle comrade would at least sell a few papers, while the more active ones would be organising extra sales. Today, I think we often find that the less committed comrades feel they have done the minimum if they turn up to their ward or union branch and vote and speak the right way, while the more active comrades get loaded up with official labour movement positions and see paper sales as secondary to the immediate struggles which those positions throw them into.

Some comrades argue that estate sales, street sales, and energetic paper-selling generally are something for the SWP, but we should operate differently - by building up a left wing in the Labour Party and winning influence. But it is absolutely essential for us to combine paper-selling (and contact work, etc.) with work in the official structures of the labour movement. Our job is not just to assist the development of a broad, politically amorphous left in the labour movement, or to conduct debates within the often quite stale and narrow circles of existing labour movement activists - it is to build a revolutionary Marxist organisation.

Militants in a workplace need to combine direct political work through individual discussions, leaflets, bulletins, etc. with activity in the trade union structure. If they ignore the trade union structure, they are sectarian; if they confine their political activity to operating within the trade union branches and committees, they will not get very far. The same principle holds for the relation of our general activity to official labour movement structures in general.

It is also said that sizeable sales may have been possible in the early '70s, but times are different now.

It is true that the general level of the trade union movement, and especially of industrial organisation, is lower than before about 1976. But sales of revolutionary papers do not depend directly on the average level of militancy of the working class as a whole.

Our recent experience with new estate sales and street sales has been higher sales than comparable activities in the early '70s. The overall sales of the left press, as far as I know, are higher than they were then. Today's Labour Left provides a readily available milieu for sales which hardly existed in the early '70s, and one which our paper is well suited to.

The periphery of the Left today contains a greater proportion of tired and domesticated ex-revolutionaries, and a lower proportion of fresh new militants, than ten years ago. That is a problem for sales. But much more of a problem, I think, is that many of us have adapted to the pressure of the tired and domesticated ex-revolutionaries.

The ex-revolutionaries jeer and sneer at those who remain true to their ideas. The outward and visible sign of someone who is sticking to their ideas and fighting for them is, generally, paper-selling. So the ex-revolutionaries mock paper-selling. And revolutionaries can often drift halfway along the road with them, telling themselves that paper-selling is all right for brash and naive youth, but not very dignified for someone who is the chair of this and the secretary of that and generally a solid, respected citizen.

Then even our younger comrades get a prematurely middle-aged attitude to paper-selling, for they pick it up from the older comrades.

One final point on the reasons for low sales. Our internal troubles have played a role, in three ways.

Comrades disgusted and wearied by the internal arguments have turned away to bury themselves in this or that local work. It is understandable, but it means depoliticising yourself. Also, the arguments we've had to have against Healyite-type banner-waving and chest-beating have led to some comrades one-sidedly taking the arguments too far, and becoming so 'unsectarian' as almost to fade away politically.

And the internal troubles have repelled and dispersed the circle of people round us who would perhaps take a few papers to sell or help out in some other small way.

All these bad effects can be undone. But that won't happen automatically.

4. OBJECTIONS

'The paper is not good enough for mass sales'

Who mentioned mass sales? We could increase our sales by a factor of 100 and still not have mass sales.

'Still, the paper is not good enough for wider sales'

The short answer is that - as reported in the paper - a few pioneers have proved in practice that it is good enough.

Obviously the paper has all sorts of faults. But the paper Workers' Fight which we sold in the early '70s had 100 times more journalistic faults, and we managed to shift a good number of that.

Obviously we should try to improve the paper journalistically. But the fact is that sales of papers depend a lot less on the journalistic quality of them than on the spirit and energy of the sellers.

'I could sell more papers, but I know the people who buy it won't read it'

Very few people ever read newspapers from cover to cover. They skim through them. That's unfortunate, but it is not something we can change even if we had the most brilliant team of journalists in the world. And better for people to glance through our paper than not to see it at all. Better, even, for them to give us 25p and then put the paper aside and forget about it, than for them not to give the 25p.

'I haven't got time for estate sales and suchlike. I'm run off my feet with meetings every night of the week'

What are you doing in all those meetings? Obviously it is sometimes politically necessary to attend meetings and activities where few other people are present who might be interested in the paper. But if most of your time is in such meetings and activities, then something is wrong. The tactical means are swallowing up the strategic ends.

If you can sell a lot of papers in meetings, fine. But if you're spending

all your political time in meetings, and selling few papers, then reconsider your schedule.

'It's difficult because there are very few of us in this area'/'It's difficult because there are a lot of us in this area, and we take up each other's sales'

There's not much you can do with these arguments except turn them round. If there are few of you in an area, you have a clear field. If there are a lot of you, you can organise wider-scale activities and expand your possibilities for paper selling that way.

'If we go round thrusting the paper at people, we will alienate them'

It is possible to be so heavy-handed that you alienate people. But that is the least of our problems at present. We are more likely to alienate people by being so diffident that either they conclude that we do not think that they personally are worth approaching politically, or that we lack any drive and energy.

The tired and domesticated ex-revolutionaries may react to paper sellers with studied exasperation. But it is political and intellectual suicide to make concessions to such people.

There is no question that most people regard those of us who knock at their doors to try to sell them papers as a bit strange. But that is because they regard our ideas, and political activism generally, as a bit strange. There's no easy way round it. Our choice is between appearing a bit strange to them - and maybe getting a chance to convince some of them - and not appearing to them at all.

'I can see how you can sell papers elsewhere, but here in X it's impossible'

In the final logical reduction there is no answer to this argument except personally to go to X and sell papers there. (And then the determined objector will probably claim that it was an exceptional day and things are different in normal times!)

But the vast majority of our comrades live in sizeable towns or cities with a large Labour-voting population. All experience is that reasonable paper sales are possible in any such area. The variation in paper sales from local group to local group is much more to do with the energy, or lack of it, of the group, than with any peculiar unreceptiveness of the local population in general.

'I'm shy'

This is an honest and straightforward objection, and quite understandable. But the same sort of problem arises with speaking at meetings, talking to contacts, and political activity generally. (Though in varying ways: some people are quite happy to speak to large meetings, but tongue-tied with contacts; some, the converse). Paper-selling, like speaking and talking to contacts, is nevertheless a basic skill which every revolutionary just has to acquire, if only minimally. And in fact a lot of very shy people have been able to make themselves in quite competent paper-sellers.

5. A FINAL POINT: PAPER-SELLING AND INTEGRATING NEW COMRADES

In the '60s and early '70s, the first activity that revolutionary groups would bring new sympathisers or members into was generally paper-selling. But we, today, tend to bring new people first into going to meetings. This creates problems. A new comrade can do a paper sale as well as, maybe better than, someone who has been in the organisation for many years. But at a labour movement meeting that new comrade may well be bewildered and feel useless. A shift in activity towards paper-selling can therefore go together well with making ourselves more welcoming, accessible, outgoing and positive towards new people.

GOODEYE TO ALL THAT.

The statement on WSL 2nd Annual Conference from DCF is hopefully the final swipe at the organisation that will now allow us to go ahead building on our ideas with a genuine and fruitful internal democracy. That is, one that is not continually discussing whether or not someones speech should have been printed first, or who said what about who outside a meeting.

But first I would like to make a few points in response to some of the assertions, speculations and downright lies contained in the DCF's parting shot. Normally I might have let it pass but in line with the DCF's decision to split they have ceased to simply attack the leadership, in an attempt to split us from them, but now dismiss the lot of us. And instead of trying to woo such as myself, a couple of the allegations within it are aimed at me.

This article does not pretend to be a comprehensive response; it's all that I managed to get done. Numbers in the article relate to the numbered sections in the 'statement'.

1) To have participated in the conference 'fully' as they say and then left when nothing political has changed since suggests a sub-political motive for their actions. They knew that they were a minority; they knew that they wouldn't win on the political issues; they knew that the expulsions would be confirmed (only the size of the majority was in doubt) so why participate if the confirmation of this knowledge means that you leave? So what happened? Much has been said on the confused mixture of the DCF's politics; they came together on what they saw as the issue of democratic centralism. After the conference had decided, what was there to hold them together? They would have fallen apart from having no reason to exist or they would have fallen apart trying to find a common political line. The only way to keep the DCF together was to get out quick.

And if it is true, as I believe it is that what political direction they did have was provided by Smith's sympathisers then they must have pushed hard for getting out quick. The sooner (and in greater numbers) to re-unite with Smith.

Smith had always claimed 38 or 39 for his faction but when required to do so only provided 35 names. It wouldn't be the first time that a faction has had secret members or left some behind to carry on it's work.

2) After asserting that the expulsions, or rather the re-division of the organisations, is a fundamental breach with Leninism, the statement goes on and seeks to illustrate this by reference to the 'superficial debates and proceedings' at the conference. Well it takes two to make a debate and if the DCF truly participated fully then they must share part of the blame.

However I didn't find them superficial, but in many ways a tidying up recognising the big majority on many of the positions eg. Afghanistan & the Falklands, that has existed for some time. The debates were won long ago. The opposition to them could hardly muster a good argument.

3) "It was obvious...(how was it obvious?)...they are no more willing to tolerate our faction....vicious campaign of slander and character assassination" etc, etc. There is no evidence for this but if muck was thrown then there was more from the DCF than anywhere. Rather I think the statement is meant to play up to the hurt feelings of DCF members, more than anything else.

"An illustration of the shape of things to come..." and then the alleged attack on Cde. Levy and the bookstall. It was a common trait of the old WSL comrades both pre and post fusion to assert an underlying current or development and then select examples to supposedly illustrate it. The examples on their own might be rather piffling. Hence Smith at the NC told us that his speech at the September 17 conference being printed the week after Carolans was 'a small thing in itself' but illustrated something

deeper, a trend...etc, or the introduction to his piece on Grenada that was written by the editors was a small thing in itself, but... and so on. 2
Here the incident of the bookstall is but an illustration of " ...
torrents of abuse, open threats of physical violence, threats of expulsion
..."

Now I don't know what happened that Saturday night (and I voted against Carolans insistence that the conference discuss it even though the DCF had virtually made the statement of their side because I didn't want to waste time on the latest 'scandal'.) but I am willing to bet that the 'full-timer' responsible for the books has not returned them to the organisation for which he was responsible.

As an example of intolerance 'Cde. Hill's intervention in the conference on the Sunday morning, seeking to overturn an amendment carried the previous day' is a pretty poor example. So much for handraisers! We got our instructions wrong on Saturday and were too stupid to respond correctly when given a second chance on the Sunday. Clearly there is no hope for us!

And what of "a new NC reinforced with additional hand-picked Carolan loyalists". What of the nominating commission elected from the floor of conference? What of a slate drawn up but with other nominees going forward? What of the elections? Alterations to the NC's recommended size from the floor of conference? For Carolan to have handpicked despite these democratic impediments he must be very clever indeed.

4) 'Illustration' of the political decline of the Organisation is said to be that the "Tasks and Perspectives" document.....was moved, amendments taken, "discussed", and voted upon inside 45 minutes.' Actually it was an hour and a half by my notes as I was chairing the session. None of the DCF comrades who were 'fully participating' in the conference objected to the time scale as I remember, besides which the document wasn't entirely new. It had been around as IB83, IB86 apart from being printed afresh, with some amendments, for the conference. It had certainly been discussed earlier in Sheffield and Yorkshire.

All the other claims of inadequate discussion etc. come down (if true) to the fact that the majority did not want to rush into a conference at this time; rather we wanted to concentrate on the miner's strike. It was such as the DCF who forced a conference.

But I think there is some truth in the claim of an inadequate level of political discussion throughout the organisation. We have been obliged, throughout the last two years, to 'discuss' lies, slander and vilification, scandals and shrill accusations, and any attempts at political discussion have been poisoned by these.

Now this is over perhaps we can begin discussing politics again; we haven't been allowed to for too long.

5) After asserting that we wouldn't really have had a majority for separating the two organisations if the expelled 35 had been present ('It must be remembered that a fair number of Comrades' voted to accept a fait accompli - must it? Where's the evidence?) the authors then claim that as a reason for why the NC twice rejected, unconstitutionally, demands for a special conference to decide on expulsions. Now plenty has been written on the constitutionality of the NC's action but notice the sleight-of-hand. The NC did not reject calls for a conference on expulsions but acted on calls for a conference to discuss the internal regime and the 'lies, slander and vilification' that were flying about.

And what a wonderful subject that would have made (and did make) for a pre-conference discussion period at such a time. The NC acted to minimise the damage by calling an ordinary conference that could discuss some politics as well. It tried to call it for a time that would be outside the miner's strike (few people expected it to go on this long) - '6 weeks after the end of the miners strike or 3 months from now (March 31st) whichever is the sooner'.

There was nothing unconstitutional about it. And having had that conference, rushed as it was, with the pre-conference discussion period necessarily clashing with comrade's work around the NUM dispute, the DCF can hardly then complain about 'superficial debates' and 'least adequate discussions ever staged'.

After this comes the assertion that some newly recruited candidate members were swiftly made up to vote for expulsions - "Not least from Manchester, Sheffield and Stoke". Now I don't know about Manchester or Stoke but I do know about Sheffield.

We did indeed consider making up our candidate members just before the conference - the time when having a vote or not does matter a great deal. Two were up for consideration: one who had indicated in the discussions that he was not sure and might abstain on the expulsions (which he did) and one who broadly supported the actions. We only made one up, at that time - the one who abstained. "Significant"? Perhaps; but it hardly "shows how cynically new members can be used by such an unprincipled leadership".

And on political composition of the conference. Claiming that half were post fusion and "new" does not help the DCF's argument that it is we who have set into political decay. The fact that the DCF could not win the 'new blood' gives a good clue as to precisely whose politics are rotting.

And again on claiming that they had "no knowledge of the issues involved in the fusion, and little knowledge of the minority they were voting so obediently to expel".

Again I can speak for Sheffield; it provides a good example and one which does not help the comrades case. All five full members in Sheffield, apart from myself, are post fusion recruits. All of us had long experience and had come to know the highly unstable politics of a comrade, Markham, who was not in the expelled Faction but would certainly have joined the DCF if he had stayed around long enough. Instead he went off and joined the Castroites in the SL and apart from not doing much looks very embarrassed whenever we bump into him.

Before the expulsions he became more and more a firm advocate of the politics of the faction, a conveyor of its gossip, a bringer of its petitions, a carrier of its vitriol. Many was the hour spent arguing over the latest 'scandal' in branch meetings; and the hours grew in inverse proportion to his hours spent in the class struggle. That, I think, is why the members in Sheffield voted the way they did; and if it's true that many other members didn't have the experience then to have done so would not have helped the DCF.

6) The DCF is "the present day embodiment of the fusion as it was fought for"?

If by this they mean that they have stepped back 3 years to the days of the fusion of two groups with different traditions and recognised differences then I would agree with them. However at the fusion we agreed that we would discuss and resolve, or at least vote out, the differences by an agreed timetable and thereby knit the traditions. The DCF appear to have agreed to keep the differences perpetually up in the air, or rather try and keep them out of sight, and so suspend the fusion in time.

The true spirit of the fusion was to fight for clarity over time - a process, a living thing. The DCF oppose such clarity and call it 'intolerance'. In that sense they do not embody the fusion.

But if in their own eyes they embody the fusion then what must, or rather should, they think of the Smith Faction? They, therefore, must not

embody the fusion. Why then were the DCF so defensive and uncritical of the Smith Faction. In their eyes, documents, statements the Smith Faction could do no wrong. Surely they should have criticised them when they had the chance for being one-sided, intolerant etc. The fact that the political leaders of the DCF didn't criticise them says something about how they really did see the fusion.

7) "differences.....could and should have been containable" and there was 'a large measure of formal agreement'. Both statements are true which is why it dismays me all the more that such fire and thunder should have been raised over piffling things as whether Smith's speech at the Sept 17th Conference should have been printed the week after Carolans and all the squals about oppression and so on when there is no more liberal regime on the left.

8) Paragraph 4 of section 7 writes us all off and then 8) goes straight into discussions with the Smith Faction followed by "Together we make up a similar number(!)" and "and a far healthier and more experienced group". Could there be a more blatant statement that the DCF acted as agents for the Smith Faction? They are talking about joining with them and they can hardly have had the discussions yet!

9)&10) then predict a rosy future for the DCF and finish by casting around for anybody left who also wants a rosy future. Who could resist?

Finally, in many ways I am relieved by the DCF walking out. When I heard that Cunliffe had been chosen by them to represent them on the NC I immediately had visions of a continuation on the NC of what I thought we had put behind us - Scandals and Exposures and...etc. No one could have as little to offer the organisation as Cunliffe after his performances over the paper. However with such rubbish we have lost some good people. I hope some of them will come back when they wake up to what is happening. Others in the DCF were on their way out of revolutionary politics anyway.

We should look instead to the future and concentrate on what is happening all around us. There is now enormous potential in the Labour Movement opened up by the Miner's strike. Kinnoch and the soft left have been undermined to an extent and with a speed we could not have hoped for when the Dream Ticket received its enormous majority just 9 months ago. The Tories are wobbling and their image of resolve is shaken.

We can put the two factions behind us and get on with our work without fear of denunciation of Liquidationist! Capitulator! Revisionist! Bureaucrat! from our own ranks and make the most of the new situation in the class struggle.

There is much in the statement about how the DCF have been proved correct in their predictions and we false. And I am reminded of Smith's claim that our name would stink in the Labour Movement after this. I was discussing with someone in the MO who knew the old WSL in Oxford. She asked what had happened to Smith and Jones et al and I told her they had been expelled. "But why did you have anything to do with them in the first place?" she asked.

French 22.7.84

Mark (York), 5.12.84

Some relevant points about CF.

1. The last paper came out in August.
2. The last two meetings of CF's EB were around May. The first consisted of 4 people, two of whom were actually on the EB, and all of whom were our comrades. The second was when Joplin came to Yorkshire to what was effectively a Yorkshire youth aggregate of our organisation.
3. There has been no national focus since Nov. 1983. Even that does not really count as we were forced to strictly control who attended, as anyone unaccustomed to continual factional ranting between ourselves, WP, and the WIL would have thought us out of our heads.
The date for this year's conference has passed.
4. Since Strummer stopped being national secretary of CF, there has effectively been no nat. sec. This does not really matter in the sense that there is nothing to be secretary of.
5. CF has had no input/presence into the miners' strike or amongst the young miners, women, students, YS youth mobilised/radicalised by it.
6. Militant who, particularly at the last YS conference, recognise us as the major threat in the YS, refer to us as SO not CF.

Even Revo, perceptive as always, have recognised what has been happening. After the Nov. 1983 conference, with the departure of WP, disintegration of the WIL and total lack of other non-SO youth, they commented in their IB, "When we talk about CF we must now be quite clear that we mean the W**".

Obviously this raises the most important point: the total absence of anyone who could be termed 'raw youth' or even 'temporarily unattached'. The 'alliance' of groups is out of the window too.

It is all a bit of a mess. Nobody has mentioned the condition of CF, so I thought I would start.

The first anomaly is the gap between what CF is supposed to be and what it actually is. Why should anyone take CF seriously as an organisation to join? Equally, it is impossible to build a youth movement without having regular activity with which to draw youth in. So a major problem in building CF is that we never do anything. The best we can offer is a regular paper sale... once every three months.

We cannot build anything from a base of what CF is now, and I think several reasons exist for not revamping a CF with the same framework.

1. To do it properly would require a lot of resources, in terms of money and person-hours, that the group has not got/should not divert.
2. There is a real problem in launching such an organisation on top of a youth cadre which is so weak numerically. It is possible to overstretch by being too ambitious and actually achieve less than if we aimed for less and did things better. I think that by looking at the past few years' experience this has actually been proved.
3. Although there are unattached left youth around at the moment they are doing a lot of different things; it is not the case, as it was two years ago, that "everyone's joining Youth CND". The Youth CND as it was two years ago would have been a better environment in which to relaunch CF in its old mould; at least all the youth then were, more or less, in the 'same place'.

What is to be done? I suggest that we produce an 8 page SO youth supplement: 'SO Youth', every month or so, as a pull-out from SO.

I think there are several advantages:

1. We can use SO's name. This is more honest in terms of the state of the organisation; SO's credibility would be useful.
2. We would be attempting to draw youth into the converged SO readers' groups. Obviously this has disadvantages but it would be a short-cut across the 'size problem', in that youth would have older comrades' support in building youth membership. It would also be easier from the point of view of not having to set up another organisation/meetings etc. Youth could be doing other work instead.
3. It would be cheaper to produce a 16 page SO with an eight page youth pull-out. We would gain regularity and continuity. Logically we would ditch the CF platform but not lose the possibility of reinstituting it if we decide things have changed. One more thing: We need a national youth event. To launch the new format?