

Internal bulletin 133

May 1985

Documents for our conference, June 22-23 in Manchester

Youth report - draft by Joplin (see also IB 129)

World Economy - draft by Kinnell

Organisation report - draft by Kinnell

International report - draft by Ellis

SEE ALSO: 'After the miners' strike' - centre pages paper no.224

Palestine - IB 132 (and more to come) - also IB 127

LATE: Women's report }
Labour Party report } to come

Also in this IB:

NC minutes 30.3.85

Discussion document for conference on TU work - Entwistle

NOTE a) Every comrade has a right and a duty to attend conference.

b) Every comrade has a right to put resolutions (in the form of amendments or additions to the existing documents, please, in order to make procedure easier). You can submit these any time up to June 8, but preferably before the pre-conference school (see below).

c) In addition to the national pre-conference school, areas will organise pre-conference meetings. Branches can also organise their own discussions.

d) IBs 129 and 132 also contain material relevant to conference: write in if you haven't got them.

e) You can also submit discussion documents (not for voting) in the run-up to conference. When submitting documents or resolutions, please, if you can, type them A4 on Roneo stencils, single space, and with large margins at the sides and at top and bottom.

NC May 11-12

At the office. Starts 7pm Saturday.

Provisional agenda:

Saturday 7.15pm Current situation (rate-capping, TGWU, etc.).

8.30 Black sections

9.15 end.

Sunday 10.30 Plans for conference

10.45 Palestine

12.15 Women

1.00 Break

2.00 Labour Party

2.45 Youth

World economy

Organisation

International

'After the miners' strike'

3.45 Minutes etc.

4.30 End.

Preconference school May 18-19

At the Keskidee Centre, Gifford St, London N1. Please notify creche requirements in advance.

Saturday 11.30 After the miners' strike

2.00 Youth work

4.15 Ireland

Sunday 10.30 Palestine

2.00 Organisation

On Saturday evening and in the midday breaks there will be numerous trade union fraction meetings, commission meetings, etc. etc.

YOUTH REPORT

This is an update on the youth work document in IB 129.

New information

1. Simon P was elected to the NUS executive (and with the largest vote a far-left candidate has ever got, excluding elections weighted by deals).

2. The north-west area NUS work is tying together, but the north-east seems a little precarious given our split with Sunderland over the Union of Jewish Students business - see our paper.

3. Simon P is quite likely to get responsibility for YTS on the NUS executive; even if he doesn't YTS work will go ahead unofficially.

4. Socialist Action have launched their regional youth bulletins (Briefings in all but name), and look set to go for a national paper and collapse Revo.

5. At YS conference we were well down on last year's figures. So were Socialist Action. However, as our YS work has suffered, the NUS work has rocketed, and next term and over summer we should be able to prioritise tying them together.

6. Even though we were down at YS conference on delegates, we were again the only serious opposition on conference floor. In fact more people joined (about 10) this year than in the past when we were bigger.

7. The precise details of turning our student base to YTS trainees will have to be worked out area by area. But the outline in IB 129 still stands.

Revo and the youth Briefing

Revo took their 'project' to Briefing conference. It was defeated. So, deprived of the franchise, they changed the name to 'activist bulletin' and got on with it.

At the moment six bulletins exist. One, in the north-east, is entirely ours. It suits our purpose; there is nothing wrong with it. It draws people into closer work with us.

But Revo have a more grandiose scheme in mind. It all started a couple of years ago when a lot of Revo's leading cadre were delegates to YS conference. They didn't know what to do. They couldn't argue with Militant. In fact most didn't even put their hands up to try to get to speak in the debate. Revo recoiled.

Their 'project' is designed to avoid M. By linking up the specially oppressed and sympathetic youth, they intend to create an 'activist current'. This, they hope, will (a) draw completely new people into the YS, and entice LP youth into the YS; (b) win M's base.

By default, the project is rather like the Young Liberals. Revo believe that it is a virtue that they don't challenge M's programme. The bulletins are "in the image of the YS we would like to create", said a new Revo full-timer. Which may be all very well, but rather misses the point. M are in the way, and any opposition must give programmatic alternatives to them. It is not possible to take over the YS by having a loose amalgam and hoping it grows bigger than M. They have to be fought, from the left, on the basis of politics.

It is not clear how stable Revo's conception of the bulletins actually is. But assuming that they don't zag away, we should relate thus:

Youth/2

1. There is no real 'left wing' in the YS which isn't tied up with either M, Socialist Action, or us. There is no current of 'Bennite youth'. The nearest approximations are the LCC and Revo pretending to be Bennite youth.

2. There were about nine independent left branches at conference. Two have joined us. Another 3 or 4 look like they will.

3. For the second year running we won more independent votes than Revo - proving that the bulletins do not 'fill a vacuum' and there are not dozens of branches 'looking for a campaigning alternative'.

4. Organising independents already active in the LP, as well as looking to independent YSs, could very easily lead to a right-wing bloc against M.

5. M may be wrong about women, lesbians and gays, and black sections, but being right on those issues does not add up to being to the left of M. Look at the LCC. An organisation based on this type of issue is not necessarily any more left-wing than M.

6. There may be a case for joint work in a structured way between us and Socialist Action. But that should be discussed as such. Hiding behind a few independents to present ultimatums is no way to proceed.

7. We should get involved with the bulletins. Obviously we keep our own presence - don't go for joint candidates, etc., but keep an eye on what's going on. Certainly we don't want a majority on EBs, but a couple of us arguing for our politics and articles should pull the best independents to us. A few copies of the bulletins will have to be sold, but essentially we're not going to become Briefing activists in the YS.

8. At some point we may have to pull out - especially if it is no more than a rump of Revo and a few Bennites. For now, though, we keep our options open.

Students

The central strategy for our youth and student work has been outlined by Joplin in IB 129. These further proposals should be regarded as a supplement to that IB.

There may be some unease about recruiting a lot of students. And it would be justified if there was no intention of using a student base to go out and recruit working-class youth.

The problem wouldn't be having a lot of student comrades - even though this may create, in some areas, a large unstable layer of petty bourgeois youth in the organisation - but looking as though we do nothing but student work.

There are two ways of dealing with the problem.

a) When students join, make sure they understand what they're joining, especially about labour movement commitments.

b) Ensure that the internal schools carry on and that new students are instructed to attend.

c) SSIN people in colleges without SO members should be pulled into serious politics through (i) the education process referred to below, (ii) ensuring that they get SO and meet comrades in the town through the labour movement work we shall try to convince them to do.

Youth/3

SSIN

SSIN groups have been or are being set up in colleges around the country, mostly operating as Labour Club left caucuses. In most cases they are functioning as 'loose' broad groups. However, to a large extent SSIN supporters rely on 'student left wisdoms' rather than on any kind of systematic analysis for their politics. If we do not wish to be in the leadership of an organisation of political ignoramuses, if we wish to maximise our recruitment, and if we want to defend ourselves from the prospect of Socialist Action coming back in, then we need to initiate systematic political education at local group level.

YS

Labour Party and student work are not mutually exclusive. We should be taking contacts into the YS quickly - getting them used to it and lined up with us.

In every college there should be one comrade responsible for making sure that student contacts are approached about the YS.

Other groups

The Socialist Action have zagged themselves into a corner. Last year they pulled out of SSIN (largely because we kept on beating them). Since then they have been flirting with the 'Democratic Left'. Sooner or later it will occur to SA that they have made a mistake, and they will try to come back into SSIN. We should try to stop them. The last thing we want is competition for contacts in SSIN or an organised opposition to us.

The 'Democratic Left' is not politically homogeneous. It is a bloc constructed only to stop Militant from taking NOLS. Its left wing is very close to us on paper on a number of issues, e.g. the miners. Our perspective for the DL should be to break away its left wing and bring them over to us. Doing this will involve integrating ourselves more into NOLS events, especially the day/weekend schools, and having a visible, active NUS organisation functioning as a pole of attraction.

Proposals

1. That those comrades who do not have a functioning SSIN group in their college set one up. This is necessary to create a profile and to get the contacts together and educated in a systematic way.
2. That regular educationals are organised in SSIN groups on basic issues, e.g. 'The politics of Militant', 'The AES', 'Women', etc. These educationals to be coordinated from the centre if necessary.
3. That student contacts are involved in YS work.
4. That SSIN as an organisation should have an increased profile at NOLS events (e.g. dayschools), with a view to breaking off the left of the DL.

WORLD ECONOMY

(Draft, 13.4.85. I will try to expand the points in these brief notes in articles in the paper).

1. The economic cycle

Our last overall document on the economic situation was in January 1983 (IB 21). Its assessment was:

"We are now in the midst of the third major recession within a period of stagnation and crisis for world capitalism which opened in the late 1960s".

Since early 1983 the cyclical recession has given way to cyclical recovery - quite rapid in the US, medium-fast in Japan, slow in Western Europe. There are now signs of that cyclical recovery in turn ending, and a new recession.

Possibly those indications are only 'blips', and the new recession is still a little way off. But in any case all the major features of the "period of stagnation and crisis" have continued.

Industries central to the post-war growth of capitalism are in long-term decline (cars, steel).

Unemployment is high. In the US it has decreased a bit, but in W. Europe it has continued growing right through the recovery.

Although the US remains by far the most powerful capitalist economy, its dominance - and thus the material foundation of the Pax Americana which structured post-war capitalist growth - continues to erode.

The international division of labour began to shift markedly in the early 1960s, and has continued to do so. In 1983 the US imported more manufactured goods from the Third World than it exported there.

"The stagnation or actual decline, over a long period, of national income per head in many of the world's poorest countries", noted in the 1983 document, continues. Now thousands have starved to death, and maybe millions more are at risk of starving to death, in African countries hit by drought and also in the north east of Brazil.

2. Famine

Despite the fact that it has slipped from the headlines, the famine continues in its full horror.

Its immediate cause is the drought. Its more fundamental cause is the development of capitalism in the Third World countryside - the pushing-out of subsistence peasants by cash-crops in conditions where modern industry is nowhere near extensive enough to pull them in. It has been made worse by the pressure of debt charges and IMF austerity programmes.

A lot of the Left has responded inadequately. Some say, 'It's all due to imperialist robbery' - which is half-true at best, and leads to the notion that a vague general Third-Worldist stance on international power-politics is an adequate response to the issue. Others say, 'Socialism is the only answer' - which again is only half-true, and serves as an excuse for relating to the issue with only the most general propaganda on the evils of capitalism.

The famine does indeed underline the need to fight for socialism, and we should make that point. But we should also continue to fight for palliatives, reform measures: aid without strings, cancellation of debt charges.

Such measures can make a difference. It is estimated that two weeks' worth of world military expenditure would be enough to fund an investment programme enabling everyone in the world to get enough to eat. A tiny

fraction of the EEC's surplus food stocks would save millions in Africa from starvation.

3. The US becomes a debtor nation

In the 1983 document we noted:

"The US probably could undertake a reflationist policy without running into the same problems as France".

The problem that would arise, we said, was probably "a deterioration in the position of the dollar, and eventually a run on the dollar" - as in 1975-8.

In fact the capitalist world has been pulled out of recession by US reflation - and so far without a relative decline of the dollar, thanks to some extraordinary developments.

West European and Japanese capitalists have been buying US companies, shares, and bonds at a tremendous rate. At the end of 1982 the US had net foreign assets of \$169 billion. It was the world's greatest creditor nation. By the end of 1984 the huge capital flows had so changed the position that the US had become a debtor nation.

The figures for the first half of 1984 give some picture of the process.

US exports	\$ 99 billion
imports	160 billion
Investment income	11 billion
Capital outflow	22 billion
Capital inflow	55 billion
'Statistical discrepancy'.	19 billion
(probably unrecorded capital inflows)	

Thus the US has been able to run a huge trade deficit, and pull world trade out of recession practically by its own efforts.

But the capital stock of the US can only be sold off once. It is difficult to see how the pattern of 1983-4 can continue much longer. The turning point may indeed have come already. And after that turning point it is quite possible that the dollar will decline very dramatically, thus throwing the whole system of world trade - still based on the dollar - into chaos.

4. The Pacific becomes the centre of the world economy

Up to maybe the 17th century the Mediterranean and the Indian Ocean were the centres of world trade. Then for maybe the best part of four centuries the Atlantic was the most important seaway of the world economy. The recent revival of world trade has definitely finished that era. Now, to get a better picture of the world economy, we should replace the old maps with the Atlantic at the centre and the Pacific at the two edges by maps with the Pacific in the centre.

	1970	1984 Q2
US exports	26% across Pacific, 34% to Europe	33% Pacific, 28% Europe
Imports to US	26% across Pacific, 29% from Eur.	35% Pacific, 23% Europe

About half the US-Pacific trade is with Japan, the other half from the Third World countries of the Far East.

5. New technology

Fixed investment has increased fairly rapidly in the US during the recovery, but even there it is not very high by historical standards. In Europe it has not even increased very fast.

However, every major capitalist crisis means a restructuring of capital. The use of new technology has expanded greatly in recent years.

The world market in semiconductors - the basic building-brick for new technology - has increased from \$ 8 billion in 1978 to \$ 27 billion in 1984.

World sales of computer-aided industrial equipment doubled between 1982 and 1984.

Industrial robots have come into serious use since the mid-'70s, and are now quite widespread in Japan, the US, and Sweden. The market for industrial robots is reckoned to be expanding at about 30% per year.

This trend is not confined to the advanced capitalist countries. Major portions of the electronics industry have long been sited in the Third World countries of the Far East. Countries like South Korea, Singapore, India, Brazil and Mexico are now making efforts to build up their own production capacity for high-technology equipment such as computers.

There are no signs as yet of new technology being the basis for a new wave of capitalist expansion (like the railways, or the car industry, in their day). Neither is there serious evidence that new technology is a big factor in the rise of unemployment.

However, a coherent policy on new technology is urgently needed for the workers' movement internationally. It also needs to deal with issues of the political economy of information.

6. Trade wars?

The 1983 document placed some stress on "the increasing drift towards protectionism", though it did also emphasise the checks and balances within the world system today which restrain that drift.

The restraint has continued, thanks to the peculiar character of the recovery. The vast US trade deficit has given increased markets to other capitalist countries; US capitalists, while grumbling loudly, have been partly subdued by the fact that the growth of demand in the US has been fast enough to give them, as well as the importers, increased markets.

Once the recovery breaks down, the drift will probably triumph over the restraints. Each national capitalist class will set up barriers to try to keep its own slice of a diminishing cake.

7. The debt crisis

The peculiar US boom has also allowed a softening of the debt crisis for countries like Mexico, Brazil, and Argentina - though at horrific cost for the workers and peasants of those countries.

Those countries have cut down imports dramatically, imposed austerity measures, and exported as hard as they can. In 1983, 41% of imports to the US came from the Third World, as against 26% in 1970.

Such measures have enabled the debtor countries to run huge trade surpluses and thus finance their debt payments.

But a sharp recession will probably bring the debt crisis back, as sharp as it was in 1982.

8. The Stalinist states

The Stalinist states of Eastern Europe, like the semi-industrialised states of Latin America and the Far East, have benefited from the revival in world trade - though in their case the major market is not the US but the more slowly-growing economies of Western Europe. After a slump in 1981-2, East-West trade has picked up. But now - since the 1970s - the economies of Eastern Europe are very closely linked to the pulse-beat of West European capitalism. A new recession in the West will mean crises in the East.

The USSR is much more insulated from the capitalist world economy. But it has its own problems, rooted in the difficulty of developing advanced technology on the basis of police-state compulsion of labour. Since 1975 the USSR has been growing more slowly than the US. Andropov tried to deal with this problem by such methods as sending police round cinemas and shopping queues to arrest and jail workers found to be skiving off work. Gorbachev may try similar methods and/or go for a liberalisation of the economy on the model of Eastern Europe.

China - to the great excitement of capitalists eager to grab a piece of a market with one billion people and a poor but fast-growing economy - has already gone for reintroducing much more scope for the market, admitting foreign capital, and expanding international trade. This economic liberalisation has got nothing to do with increased democratic rights for the people - free trade unions are still rigorously suppressed, and there has been a massive wave of executions of thousands of supposed 'criminals'. However, it is very far from the restoration of capitalism (economic liberalisation has gone a lot further in Eastern Europe); indeed, the basic principle of opening up the economy more to the world, and using market mechanisms more, is perfectly rational as against the old Maoist isolation and hyper-bureaucratism. The way this principle is implemented is shaped by the reactionary bureaucracy.

9. The Thatcher government

If there was light at the end of the Thatcherite tunnel, then we have already seen it and it is not very bright. The economic upturn has already happened and is probably near running its full course. Moreover, the upturn was powered not by anything deriving from monetarist doctrine but rather by the US's quasi-Keynesian policy.

In the field of new technology, Britain's competitive position has substantially worsened during the period of the Thatcher government.

Even from a capitalist point of view, monetarism is quack economics. The Thatcher team looks strong and competent only by comparison with the wretches who run the British labour movement.

Despite all that, Thatcher's victory over the miners has probably consolidated the ruling class behind her faction for a good time yet, blocking the prospects of an SDP/'wet'-Tory regroupment.

Kinnell.

ORGANISATION AND FINANCE

1. Facts and figures

Our membership - the number of 'activists' - has gone up about 20% since the departure of the DCF (the second wave of Thornettites) in July 1984. Most of that increase was soon after July, with a slow trickle thereafter.

The number of 'supporters' has increased more rapidly in recent months. It has nearly doubled since 'convergence' last December (see below). More generally, our periphery - which was substantially stripped away in the years 1981-4 - has increased a lot.

Paper sales income increased 18% between August/September 1984 and January/February 1985. The figure of 18% may underestimate the true increase in sales (because January income was depressed by us missing 2 issues at Christmas, and because increased sales by comrades selling fewer than their quota do not show up in income figures). Nevertheless, it is lower than it should be.

From late September we started a number of estate sales, and campaigned to raise paper-selling generally. This effort was pretty successful. But it soon levelled off, and in recent months the estate sales have tended to stagnate or decline.

Now, when branches are discussing their reallocation of time after the miners' strike, is the time for a new drive on paper sales.

2. In perspective

The growth of a revolutionary tendency depends on two things: the ability to make bold moves and seize chances for rapid expansion on the occasions when they arise; and doing the routine day-to-day work between such occasions in such a way as to acquire the ability to make such moves effectively and consolidate the results.

In 1976-8 - partly by choice, partly by force of circumstances - the I-CL turned heavily towards internal education and consolidation. In 1978-80 it made the S***/S* turn, trying to put the results of that cadre-building to good use in interaction with the mushrooming Labour Left.

Overall, in 1980-4, we failed to make as many gains as we might have hoped for. The 'local government Left', bigger and stronger than us, channelled away many of the militants. Militant, with its domination in the LPYS, blocked the possibility of developing a big revolutionary current in the emerging Labour Left from a base among youth (historically the main base for revolutionary currents in almost every movement). The failure of the I-CL/old-WSL fusion seriously limited us.

Nevertheless, we have come out of that period with appreciably bigger numbers than the I-CL in 1978 and certainly a vastly better implantation.

The Labour Left is still alive - as it showed during the miners' strike - and a substantial force in its own way. But a large part of it has been tamed. For the time being it does not provide an arena for the explosive growth of a revolutionary current.

Our youth work, however, has made a breakthrough in the last couple of years - among students.

Our main organisational tasks in the next year are to consolidate that breakthrough and to tighten up certain basic routines (education, contact work, paper-selling) with a view to integrating new recruits and repairing some of the damage done by the 1982-4 faction fight (see below).

In short: a turn to 'party-building'.

3. The miners' strike

From the start of the miners' strike, we made it central. On the whole we can be proud of the work we did - both our political responses and our organisational effort.

All available central organisational resources were turned to the strike. Hill worked full-time on it; other comrades, notably Joplin and Leicester, put a lot of time into it.

The paper was turned heavily towards the strike. Despite our relatively small resources, the voices of the militants - men and women - in the coalfields came through in our paper much more than in any other publication.

Where we had branches in the coalfields, we made direct links with the local NUM militants. Notts, South Yorkshire, and North Staffs were the main areas for us. In Notts we played a significant role in getting the rank and file strike committee established.

Elsewhere our comrades worked in - often initiated and/or led - miners' support committees. The Basingstoke comrades in particular showed what could be done around the miners' strike in an area many miles away from any coalfield.

We helped to get a coordination of the miners' support committees through the Mineworkers' Defence Committee.

We must continue campaigning now for the prisoners and for the sacked miners.

At the same time we must combine systematic use of our highly successful pamphlet on the strike with canvassing of former miners' support committee activists, discussing with them about their political activity after the strike and trying to draw them towards us.

4. Adjourned business

Our concentration on the miners' strike inevitably meant that some other tasks mapped out by our June/July 1984 conference remained undone.

a) Trade union fractions have generally not functioned. (Entwhistle has written separately on this).

b) CND work has gone into full decline. As it happens, CND activity generally has been lower over the last year; but there has been no real central direction at all of our own activity.

c) International solidarity work - discussed at the June/July 1984 conference - has remained at a very low ebb. The EC has had some discussions about reviving Irish work, and the publication of 'Forum' no.2 has been a useful start. Irish work should be a priority, but the other areas discussed in June/July 1984 - Palestine, Turkey, South Africa, Central America, Poland - also need consideration. We should decide how much effort we can put into each area (in some cases it will not be much), and then consciously plan the work.

These items must be taken in hand by the incoming leadership, in the context of a general turn to party-building.

5. Convergence

In December 1984 we carried through 'convergence', replacing our previous dual structure by a single one. In effect this was only a rationalisation - rejigging the labels so that they corresponded to the reality. It was, however, a necessary and progressive step, and carried through with fair success.

6. The failed fusion

The I-CL/old-WSL fusion of 1981 failed. That is a cause for sadness but not for despair: the fusion was a more difficult and ambitious project than any Trotskyist group had managed for many decades, and it was attempted in very adverse circumstances.

Moreover, we came out of it alive, functioning, and having even made strides ahead in certain areas. The good work we were able to do in the miners' strike is evidence of that.

We should, however, soberly assess the damage done by the long-drawn-out faction fight, with a view to repairing it.

- a) A lot of our periphery was repelled or lost.
- b) Our internal political life declined.
- c) A lot of comrades who had played significant roles on the National Committee or as organisers were lost or partially lost. Demoralised and repelled by the ferocious irrationality of the faction fight, some dropped out, some buried themselves in local labour movement work.
- d) Generally, throughout the organisation, comrades tended to sink into the broad labour movement around them - to make that broad movement, rather than the building of a revolutionary party, the axis of their concerns. This tendency was inevitably strengthened by the faction fight we had to have against banner-waving, declamatory sectarianism - in conditions where there was not much room for qualifications, nuances, or balancing clauses to be voiced or noticed.

There is black comedy in the way that the Thornettites, since March 1984, have collapsed into the surrounding labour movement, after all their bellowing about liquidationism and revisionism. There is also a warning for us. They were, after all, part of the same group as us. Their trajectory is a caricature of tendencies also visible among us.

- e) The general loosening of internal ties had a particularly bad effect in the sphere of finance. We developed bad habits, and ran up a vast backlog of debt.

Most of the above points were noted in the document, 'Building the WSL', discussed at the August 1983 and June/July 1984 conferences. They underline the need for a turn to party-building.

7. Central organisation

The chief priority identified at the June/July 1984 conference - getting a women's full-timer - has been tackled, with Leicester taking on the job.

However, we do not have a properly-functioning central organising team. The swivelling of all our work to focus on the miners' strike has been one difficulty here. But the incoming EC should review the situation.

8. Finance

A revolutionary organisation - unless it is lucky enough to attract some wealthy individuals - is always going to be fairly hand-to-mouth with its finances.

But in 1981-4 we were much worse than that. The organisation fell vastly, and apparently irredeemably, in debt; individuals and branches got into the habit of routinely maintaining huge debts to the organisation.

We are not out of that swamp yet. But dry ground is in sight. There has been a considerable improvement since July 1984.

If:

a) The increase in paper sales quotas is carried through properly - i.e. comrades actually sell more papers and send the money in, rather than running up big debts again;

b) The slow and painful (and uneven) improvement in a general sense of financial responsibility in the organisation is maintained;

c) Our move to new premises is successfully completed, and we are able to secure the increased commercial work which should then be possible;

if we do all that, then by the second half of this year we will be free of major debt and in a position to remain so. Financial life will be uncomfortable but manageable.

9. Schools

As part of a turn to party-building, we have organised a series of schools on basic skills and ideas.

November 30-December 1: Youth

January 4-6: Organisers

January 26-27: New comrades

February 23-24: Organisers

March 16-17: New comrades

(Forthcoming:)

April 20-21: Women

May 4-5: New comrades

May 18-19: Pre-conference school.

On the whole these schools have been judged pretty successful by those taking part. We should continue a programme of schools as a regular feature of the life of the organisation.

Educationals in the branches also need to be organised more systematically. 'How to do an educational' is a regular slot in the schools.

Our substantial recruitment of students makes this even more important: students have more to unlearn than young workers, and generally are less willing spontaneously to read and to study.

Kinnell. 13.4.85

INTERNATIONAL REPORT

Ellis. (Note: This is a first draft. Amendments will come on the USFI Congress, other would-be Trotskyists, etc.)

The organisation's international work is extremely weak in every respect. This document summarises the state of this work, and makes some suggestions for the future.

1. Our international work: contacts and possibilities

The only proper group outside of Britain that we have is in Australia. In addition we have a comrade in Toronto, in Canada; a comrade currently in France; and we have loose contacts with a number of organisations elsewhere.

First, some background. In the past, the I-CL had contacts with a number of groups. Our contact with Lutte Ouvriere in France goes back to the late '60s. In 1977 Kinnell worked with them for a period of two months, and they (briefly) sent a comrade to work with us.

In 1977 the I-CL participated in the so-called Necessary International Initiative (NII), which grouped together the Spartacusbund in Germany, the IKL in Austria, and a small split from the USFI in Italy. The NII (see IC 2/3) collapsed, largely because the Spartacusbund were using it as a substitute for doing actual work in the class struggle, and as a short cut to building an international tendency. These groups have all subsequently collapsed.

The 1981 fusion took us into the Trotskyist International Liaison Committee (TILC), the origins of which were in the links of the old WSL with other groups expelled from the Healyite movement internationally at about the same time as it in Britain (1974). In addition to ourselves, the TILC as of 1981 included the Revolutionary Workers' League in the USA, TAF in Denmark, LOR in Italy, and individuals from Chile, as well as our Australian group. An emigre Turkish group had joint membership with the League.

In fact, TILC was a fiasco. It broke down after the dispute on the South Atlantic war, degenerating into a bear-garden as the RWL majority, in particular, attempted to split the WSL. (They had joined TILC only in 1981, and appear to have had 'entrlist' perspectives).

In a sense they were successful. The RWL-influenced Internationalist Faction (briefly the WIL, now virtually defunct) tried unsuccessfully to turn TILC into a democratic-centralist group. (This demand was in fact a tactical gambit, since they considered a large part of TILC 'revisionist'). TILC collapsed in April 1983, TAF and LOR going with the RWL majority.

TILC was an unstable coalition of sectarians, and indicates once more the futility of 'short cuts' towards building an international tendency.

As a result of last year's split, we are in fact in a much better state to pursue fruitful international work. We are a distinctive tendency among the fragments of would-be Trotskyism, and now that we are free to argue our own politics without constantly having to watch our backs, we are potentially in a stronger position.

There were some negative effects too, of course. We have lost (either directly or indirectly as a result of the split) some comrades with most detailed knowledge on certain international questions; we need to rebuild our expertise.

i) Australia

The Australian group 'Socialist Fight' pre-dates TILC, and was, during the TILC period, in political sympathy with the I-CL tradition. They now have a small group - a dozen people - in Melbourne and Sydney.

About two years ago they fused with the Australian SWP (the USFI section, and the largest far-left group in Australia). The central focus of their opposition was to argue for a more serious labour movement orientation, modelled on our work in Britain - the Australian labour movement is very similar to the British. (They had a dispute with the SWP majority about the Australian 'Nuclear Disarmament Party', with the SWP majority arguing for a turn to this new party).

At the end of last year they left the USFI group; and at the moment there is a dispute among them as to the possibilities for establishing a broader labour movement paper. They have produced one issue of a duplicated magazine.

ii) Other

The comrade in Toronto has contact with a number of individual revolutionary socialists and has circulated some of our documents.

The comrade in France is there as part of his degree. He is working with various Trotskyist groups, translating articles for us, etc.

iii) Further contacts

The paper is sent out to a large number of countries.

We have contacts with a Turkish comrade in Dijon, in France, who agrees with us on numerous questions and has read some of our material, but is reluctant to be brought closer to us. A comrade in Denmark wrote in requesting back copies of the paper on the miners' strike and has been provided with this material and others.

The Italian Morenist group (publishing 'Perspectiva socialista') broke with Moreno over the South Atlantic war, and has connections with other ex-Morenists in Portugal, Greece, etc. Material has been exchanged between us and them, but as yet nothing firmer has come of it.

The RWL (Edmund Samarakody's group) in Sri Lanka has been given some of our material. We also have contact with a small German group, a splinter from the USFI.

At the moment, attempts are being made to contact the Swedish section of the USFI. Via our Australian comrades we have a copy of a USFI world perspectives document in which the Swedish group made some important amendments - for example, they had our position on the South Atlantic war.

A current has existed in the French LCR for some time sharing many of our positions (on Afghanistan, on the South Atlantic war, on Cuba, on the Iran/Iraq war, etc.) In 1982 it declared an international tendency in the USFI (see IB 125). We do not know anything further on this group.

Finally: attempts have been made to maintain contact with the former RWL minority in the USA, now called WSL. Several letters have not been answered.

2. The would-be Trotskyist movement

The USFI held its World Congress earlier this year. Precise details are as yet unclear, but it seems clear that a deal was made.

The USFI has been progressively breaking up for some years. In 1979 it split (see 'Workers' Action' magazine) over Nicaragua. The breakaway group, led by Nahuel Moreno, united with the current around the French PCI (the 'Lambertists'), to form the Fourth International (International Committee) - an unprincipled affair which collapsed ignominiously two years ago.

Since then, the warring tendencies in the USFI have continued to be at war. The SWP (US) has formally rejected various central features of Trotskyist politics (most notably the theory of permanent revolution) in its attempts to woo the 'revolutionists of action' in Havana and Managua.

The SWP (Australia) is politically extremely close to the Barnes/Waters leadership of the SWP (US), but they have evidently fallen out over the Barnesites' 'turn to industry', the Australians refusing to see this as the panacea for all ills.

A document produced by the Australian group, 'The Struggle for Socialism', expresses very clearly the political line of the Castroite groups in the USFI. It refers to 'socialist countries', going on to insist that the task of the 'political revolution' (in Eastern Europe, the USSR and China; they don't include Cuba or Vietnam) is not to 'smash' the state institutions but to strengthen them. (The KGB?!) The whole document is 'campism' with a vengeance, and demonstrates quite clearly that a part of the USFI is now effectively Stalinist.

The American SWP expelled two pro-Mandel groups, one of which has been favoured by the USFI centre and produces a paper called 'Socialist Action' (SA).

The SWP-US paper, 'The Militant', becomes increasingly bizarre. Currently, in addition to its stock-in-trade of printing speeches by Castro, Bishop and Ortega, it has evidently embarked upon a project to organise the American farmers. Arguing that capitalist is destroying the American small farmer, 'The Militant' advances a programme to follow the example of... Cuban agriculture.

In contrast to the Castroites, the Mandelite majority appear very 'orthodox' and with some kind of idea of working-class politics. This is largely illusory.

Campism - the idea that world politics is fundamentally a matter of progressive states, nations and movements ('the Revolution') against reactionary ones ('Imperialism'), rather than class struggle - is central to both wings of the USFI. They all speak of 'the three sectors of the World Revolution', etc. The argument over Cuba is largely one of assessment. Mandel does not call for political revolution. There is little substantive disagreement over Nicaragua now - both sides concur that there is some form of workers' power there, and Socialist Action Britain recently described Nicaragua as 'socialist'.

Facing an emerging revolutionary crisis in Bolivia, the USFI majority effectively calls for coalition with the bourgeoisie (see recent articles in the paper).

It had been expected that the USFI should, however, split at its World Congress. It did not, although the Castroites apparently had

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very little presence. Some kind of deal has clearly been done (apparently - this may not be true - with the effect in Britain of producing a Castroite-Rossite majority coalition).

Presumably some sort of unity will be negotiated in the USA.

We should be clear: there should be no place in a movement pledged to working-class politics for the American SWP and its supporters. That the Mandelites tolerate them, and even appear to want to avoid a split, is extremely instructive.

International solidarity

In the past, international solidarity work has been extremely haphazard. Comrades get involved in campaigns if they feel like it, with no central direction, no political perspective. The result is not good.

At the moment virtually all international solidarity work has ceased.

Aside from Irish work (to be dealt with separately) we have a few comrades involved in Palestinian solidarity work, and one or two who have a toe still in Iranian work. So far as I know, that's it.

All work in Central America solidarity campaigns, Turkey or Poland campaigns has collapsed.

Partly, of course, this is because of the miners' strike. But it does require of us that we think about how, and in what form, to reorganise such work.

For the most part, in fact, solidarity campaigns are extraordinarily low-level affairs. Of necessity, campaigns separate from big international events just tick over for most of the time and have very little life.

Some campaigns are fairly unpleasant Stalinist front organisations.

I think our basic approach for the immediate future should be as follows:

1. We improve the international coverage in the paper. At the moment such coverage is skimpy and largely being thrown together by myself.

This means (a) That comrades with knowledge of particular areas should volunteer articles for the paper. If something important is happening in a country/area you know about, don't be shy about putting pen to paper.

(b) We need to establish precisely what the areas of the world are where we have such expertise. For that reason, please fill in the sheet at the end of this document if you feel you can.

(c) We need to develop knowledge of those important areas where we do not have such expertise.

(d) We establish, within reason, certain prioritised international issues for coverage, in accordance with the points below.

2. We educate ourselves as an organisation on international questions. This means, in particular, branches must schedule branch educationals on the following international topics:

The 'world Trotskyist movement' today
Poland
South Africa

Int'l/5

Bolivia
Brazil
Imperialism
Nicaragua.

Speakers can be provided.

If possible, branches might organise public meetings.

3. We organise international solidarity work according to the actual development of big international events, and we do so as an organisation.

This means:

(a) Responding quickly to major events, e.g. imperialist invasions, revolutions, etc.

(b) In addition to coverage in the paper/magazine, we attempt to produce short pamphlets on such issues as they arise. This could take the form of special issues of the magazine.

(c) We raise, in the labour movement, issues relating to such countries: e.g. condemning the apartheid regime, calling for links with independent non-racial trade unions in South Africa.

That is, we prioritise fairly low-level propaganda on these countries, as day-to-day international work, being prepared to change gear if conditions change.

Central to doing this work properly is that we commit ourselves as an organisation to developing our stock of knowledge on international questions.

I would suggest that our solidarity work, in this sense, should focus on:

Poland; South Africa; Bolivia; Nicaragua.

And, in addition to these countries, we develop our understanding of:

Brazil; the Indian sub-continent as a whole; the USA; France; Denmark.

Tasks

Task Number One, to repeat, is to educate ourselves as an organisation on international issues.

We also have to be more energetic in looking for international contacts. This means, at least:

1. Establishing regular paper sales at Speakers' Corner on Sundays.
2. Finding new places (left-wing bookshops etc.) to sell the paper, outside of Britain. We should also think about translating some material, e.g. IB 49 on imperialism.
3. Looking for contacts outside of the would-be Trotskyist movement. For example, we have written to two Argentine Marxists in Mexico who (broadly) shared our position on the South Atlantic war. We have a comrade going to Mexico later this year, so it may be possible to make further contact.

QUESTIONNAIRE

Please fill in this form and return it to Ellis at the office.

Name.....

Branch

Do you have any particular interest in a country/region of the world (e.g. Middle East, Latin America, etc.)? Please give details, i.e. some indication of the extent of your knowledge, if able to do further study into it, etc.

Are you prepared to study a new area/country etc? If so, where?

NC March 30 1985

Present: Carolan, Ellis(Gate - LGSM), Fraser, French, Hill, Joplin, Kinnell, Leicester, Matthews, O'Connor, Potter, Scott, Weightman, Whettling, Dave B, Mike G, Keyvan, Entwistle, Tim A.

Apologies: Casey.

1) LEFT & THE STRIKE

Kinnell introduced. The strike was a major political test: it will be a point of reference for many years. We argued for general strike; police out of coalfields, democratic control over police, workers' self defence; four day week, workers' control, workers' plan for energy.

SWP? Took up none of the wider political issues: the whole content of their agitation was simply to call for "more picketing". They have a tunnel vision which defines working class politics as simply direct-action rank-and-file industrial militancy. Over recent years this has led to their theory of the "downturn". Their assessments of the strike were way off-beam: e.g. in April and again in June they were proclaiming that the strike was on the point of collapse.

Socialist Action: also reflected broader political issues. But the centre of their politics was a teleological vision of 'Scargillism' as the next stage in the 'process'. Their slogans were variable and unclear because of internal faction fights, but the main one was - a national demonstration led by Neil Kinnock.

RCP : made alot of noise - not saying much politically, but denouncing the NUM leaders. Their denunciations based on claims which are simply untrue, e.g. that Scargill did not call for widening the struggle out.

Militant : formally on paper, relatively good. Took up some of the wider issues (though the police, of course, in their own reformist way); called for a general strike. But formally good positions nullified by their extreme sectarian practice - e.g. no cooperation in miners support committees.

CP etc : now are being 'wise after the event', saying that industrial militancy is outdated, etc. The Eurocommunists and the SWP are in a way mirror images of each other - both giving up on the notion of politically transforming the labour movement. Both are likely to gain some influence in the aftermath of defeat. We must fight both.

2) PERSPECTIVES IN NUM

HILL : Situation in NUM is very bad. Management on the offensive e.g. vetoing or blocking union efficiency and safety visits; threats of sacking; etc.

There have been several small disputes, with limited success, but there has been considerable demoralisation - eg ballot defeat.

The CP-influenced area leaderships have used this to kick loose from Scargill and move rightwards. Eg no campaign for ballot - drive to drop overtime ban (Though the issue of the overtime ban is a difficult one).

Calling off the overtime ban is an unnecessary and damaging retreat, though it would be wrong to call it a sell-out. There's a bitter defensive struggle in the pits. Amnesty is a central issue, though the ballot vote makes it much more difficult.

Question of expelling Notts Area: a break-up of the NUM is very serious - it's very important to try to keep one union. So we've counselled against an impatient, ultra-left line. But the problem now is that the Notts Area already has broken away in fact: its victimising strikers etc. The issue is not how can we stop the breakaway, but how can we reunite the NUM.

Hill(cont) So we should support action against the Notts leaders. To delay will give them a chance to consolidate, undercut a campaign to rebuild NUM in Notts. We should discuss this issue.

Labour Party? Militancy provoked by strike is going to continue. Miners will move into LP. We can propose LP workplace branches.

We should also propose a rank-and-file movement across unions - and policies for it, eg workers' plan for energy.

What about a rank-and-file movement inside the NUM itself? It can't really take off unless Scargill and Heathfield are involved in it. And Scargill is not geared to that sort of organisation - he generally operates through cabals. Anyway, we should call for a rank and file movement. There are various very tiny initiatives. We should also discuss a programme within the NUM.

Carolyn Maybe we should do an open letter to Scargill on a rank-and-file movement, and campaign to get people to sign it.

Notts: it's true that there is a defacto split and the issue is a battle for advantage in that split. Nevertheless, the strike being over, we should be cautious about advocating measures against Notts. So I disagree with Hill.

Weightman London Bridge is a good example of what can be done in the way of building a rank and file movement.

LP: we should organise around resolution we got through last LP conference on police and industrial disputes.

Pit LP branches? They can be difficult because of the way the NUM is structured. For sure there aren't any now.

O'Connor Open letter is a good idea for propaganda, but not much ore. NUM Broad Lefts could be organised in areas with right wing leaders, eg Lancashire.

Entwhistle 'Militant' says miners' strike wasn't a defeat. What about SA?

'Militant' now focusses mainly on miners joining the LP. We have to take initiative in organising miners to join.

Notts - I think Hill is right. Lynk is using the time he's given to build strength. The longer we leave it, the worse.

Scott I also agree with expulsion. The only way to rally people is to pose the issues sharply. In North Staffs strikers have done well in NUM branch elections - we can win back the seats. In Durham a scab union has already been set up.

We should make as much as we can of the LP leadership issue. There's a basis for campaign to draft Benn.

SNP says we should go for minimal things. We should look to mobilising people round demands on the state machine, MIS etc.

Whetling Agree mostly with Hill, though maybe he errs towards pessimism. In midlands pits even tiny minorities of strikers are not demoralised and are getting good response from scabs.

Agree with Hill and disagree with Carolyn about Notts.

Shilly-shallying now with help Lynk. That's certainly the view of all the NUM activists I know.

Prisoners' campaign is important - we should involve relatives.

Matthews There is demoralisation, and it's rising, though it wasn't so bad even after the return to work.

If NUM were stronger you might let the Notts Area be. But you can't - even though the break will certainly lead to non-unionism.

Rank and file movement? But I can't see major industrial struggles over the next year or so. We can argue for a rank and file movement but practically I don't see many chances for a breakthrough.

Carolyn NUT ballot indicates that defeatism is not all-enveloping. Expulsion of Notts? I'm not sure about how to minimise losses in Notts. Maybe the clean cut is best, but I'm not sure, and we should not appear to be hot for a split in the NUM. We should not just reflect gut feeling.

3) ACTIVITY IN STRIKE

Hill reported. We decided to turn the organisation to the strike, and we did it despite the difficulties of the split - much to our credit. Produced a useful paper: made a real direct contribution in Notts Area. We did recruit during the strike, not just miners. We have 3 NUM members and 2 pit village women. SO is well known.

Need to work to consolidate the recruits. Pamphlet - tremendous response. We must use it. School - towards end of April. We can continue to make gains.

French A good thing about our work in the strike is that it's taken us out of routine rounds of meetings to other activity.

Giving the paper away to strikers was right. We had a part in the coal boycott in the Midlands.

O'Connor We have to fight the tide of demoralisation inside the LM. I'm unhappy about skipping a paper after the strike, though pamphlet has gone very well.

Whetling SWP and Militant have recruited a lot of miners on a loose basis, but they'll lose them fast. We can recruit a few but not massive numbers of miners - but a lot from miners' support committees etc.

Hill Paper immediately after the strike? We had to make a choice with limited resources. It was right to maximise resources for the pamphlet.

4. STRIKE IN PERSPECTIVE

Carolyn introduced.

Kinnell Thatcher leadership strong and impressive when compared to labour movement leadership. But in reality it is a fairly incompetent leadership for the bourgeoisie.

Scott is right: we should develop more agitation round democratic demands. Many people who were active in miners' support committees etc will now be reconsidering their activity. We should try to recruit them quickly.

Scott Democratic demands are very important not only police but also on courts etc. We should formulate a platform.

TUS: TUC is trying to make campaigns on political levy apolitical. If unions lose the votes then maybe the pro-levy minorities should affiliate to LP separately.

A Kinnock Labour Government? Will be faced with terrible economic conditions - could be like MacDonald 1931. That could push them to a witch-hunt now.

Entwhistle 'Turn inwards' not a new idea. But it's difficult to implement. Militant and SWP have very limited fields of work: we have more.

We need more pamphlets etc - miners pamphlet better than SO Forum. The fractions aren't operating. They should.

Weightman Tories weak? They have made plenty of blunders but have been saved by Labour/TU leadership.

O'Connor 'Turn inwards'? Yes but we also have to integrate people into the LM. We need to organise our interventions better.

Carolyn Disagree with Scott about splitting unions over political affiliation. Should counter with eg LP workplace branches.

MacDonald perspective - Scott could be right. But I don't think Kinnock etc understand that. So I don't expect a big witch-hunt. Problems with turn inwards? Individual local activity cannot be more important than our organisation. We should not cut ourselves off, but we should insist that our own branch meetings etc are central.

5) Women

Leicester One of the major gains from strike was the politicisation of working class women. Reported on WAPC organisation after the strike. Must work in WAPC, especially for May 4th conference, and in LP women's sections.

We should be holding WF meetings locally.

Discussion on WAPC status in relation to NUM: agreed we should argue for affiliation.

FRENCH A lot of pit women's groups have collapsed since the strike

Kinnell Weren't there two sorts of women's groups - ones which were exclusively focussed on soup kitchens etc, and therefore likely to collapse, and ones with broader activity?

What about impact of miners' strike on broader women's movement?

Leicester Yes, 2 sorts of women's groups. We need to organise the minority who want to remain active in the collapsing women's groups.

In the broader women's movement - look at Greenham! Yes, there are women we can attract.

Matthews We need to look to wider women's movement. At the time we launched WF, the movement was strong - moving into the LP. Then there was a fragmentation, a decline into deformism. The miners' strike revived a lot of women. How can we build on that?

Carolyn miners' strike shows @possibility of class struggle opening road to women's liberation - miners were previously very backward.

Weightman Spare Rib paid little attention to miners' strike. That does mean immense openings for WF.

Entwhistle Too few women in SD. We have to work in LP women's sections - get a national effort in that field - use it to keep individual pit women in activity and also turn LP women to pits.

Fraser Spare Rib not representative. It's very cliquey now. A lot of feminists in community groups, unions etc did a lot around the miners' strike.

Matthews is right - we should try to get a broad WF conference.

6) POLITICAL LEVY

Weightman London reg. conference resolution calling for LP campaign on political levy was pushed off agenda by TU delegations. That's typical. TUs are running the campaign in an a-political way. LCC had a campaign, but that's disappeared. Outcome is not at all clear.

As regards doing independent activity we can best do it through the LP.

Kinnell Will the issue be discussed at TU conferences this year?

French NUR is putting a lot of money into it - identifying key activists to work on the campaign. And they don't seem to be hiding LP link, or suppressing local initiative. NUR AGM is discussing the issue this year - I have a resolution up.

Scott ASTMS has organised various meetings. But official line is against mentioning LP link. I'm organising a 'political levy payers' group in my branch.

Approaching it through LP channels not a good idea - trade unionists could resent it.

Hill LP nationally is worried but defers to TUs on how to run the ballots. Trouble is, the left has done the same, apart from Peter Hain and Benn.

Use LP channels? I think yes. LPs should try to convene meetings of affiliated organisations.

Appleyard Basnett's line in GMBU is very low-key, hiding LP link. But TGWU in Merseyside is recruiting to the LP. In one week they got 18 people into one ward. In Wirral DLP we've got a campaign ctte of LP, TUs, Councils - we've even got a right wing NALGO branch involved. Also we're doing a LP recruitment campaign on estates, starting May.

Matthews Should use political levy campaign to build up LP workplace branches.

Entwhistle I used to think we should boycott the ballots. Obviously we can't now. In Nottingham a LP TULC has approached the regional TUC and local TUs to offer help.

Carolyn Could we advocate LP factory bulletins?

Weightman Yes, we can use LP TU liaison committees. Also Carolyn's idea - can be linked with LP workplace branches.

7) RATE-CAPPING

Fraser Situation is described in the paper. What do we do now? The leftwing councils are still holding, but only just eg Hackney is weak.

Hackney workers are planning to "work in". In paper Tommy Douras describes it as an occupation, but that's not how he's explained it before. JSSC had been saying that they couldn't get a strike so should work in instead.

Better position is a strike with occupation. Also better in order to get support.

Weightman What T.D. says in the paper is untrue - he's glossing it up. You need a clear-cut strike to get solidarity.

Islington NALGO criticises a work-in and calls for occupation with emergency services.

Kinnell We seem to be agreed on what we argue for: occupation with emergency services. Question is whether T Douras is being honest. We should organise investigations.

DiConnor Manchester is unclear. But it looks likely to collapse. Trouble is that they can make a legal rate and no cuts. What do we propose?

Hill What is the situation in Liverpool?

Appleyard Merseyside County Council caved in on the first day. Liverpool? Council finances not clear. But Militant seems to be building up an excuse for themselves by splitting the JSSC.

Kinnell Should call for other councils to stop debt payments.

AGREED EC to convene meeting with Kendall, Fraser, Weightman.

8) CONFERENCE

EC Report approved: conference June 22-23.

Weightman Should we have a report on local government?

AGREED Kinnell and Kendall to draft.

Entwhistle Will write something on TU

NEXT NC: APRIL 27-28

9) PALESTINE

Carolán briefly explained our old 'democratic secular state' position and his own current position; Kinnell and Ellis outlined their positions (See IB 132)

SUNDAY

MINERS SUPPORT COMMITTEES

Discussion on what to do about miners' support committees after the strike. Following resolution passed:

1. We argue for miners' support committees to continue, centring activity around the sacked and jailed miners.
2. We also argue for the committees to give support to other struggles eg teachers, council workers.
3. Where a support committee is clearly dwindling, we argue for it to merge into a local LP trade union liaison committee or campaign committee, Trades Council campaign committee etc, as appropriate locally.
4. We try to recruit miners' support committee activists into the LP, into Labour left caucuses(and into SO).

Introduction

This short document was written quickly and is intended to 'start the ball rolling' on a discussion on TU work. It is by no means a comprehensive document and I would welcome amendments, additions and deletions as comrades see fit.

Responsibilities of the NC/EC

We need a full-time Industrial Organiser. The NC needs to look at the resources available and decide whether we can afford another full-timer. I fully expect that at the moment the answer would be no, but there needs to be a discussion about it. Until we can afford a full-timer the EC should appoint a number of full-timers to be responsible to different union fractions. Obviously there are plenty of other responsibilities an Industrial Organiser would have apart from overseeing our TU fractions - this other work should be allocated by the EC.

Trade Union Fractions

We should have a functioning TU fraction in every union that we have members, in reality we don't have. At this year's conference a short time should be allocated for comrades to meet together in their trade union fractions. Each fraction should have an organiser. This should be sorted out at conference if your TU fraction doesn't already have one. TU fractions should aim to meet at least every three months, and more regularly in times of strikers, or high activity (run-up to union conferences etc.) Obviously there will be problems where we have very few comrades in a particular union but these can be overcome.

Ideally there should be a regular flow of information and discussion between comrades in their TU fraction, with discussion documents and bulletins etc. There should be regular liaison and discussion between the fraction organiser and the Industrial Organiser. It should go without saying that all comrades should be active in their TU unless agreed otherwise with the fraction and Industrial Organiser.

If we can get our house in order while we have relatively few members it will stand us in good stead for the future.

Involvement in TUs

This will obviously differ from union to union and will depend to some extent on the other commitments we have in the labour movement. We should avoid blanket decisions which seem to operate with Militant and the SWP (more about them later) but our activity or lack of it should be regularly monitored. Where it would be advantageous to us in some situations to take a branch secretaryship it would be disastrous in others. In my view we should err to the side of taking positions where we can but the key is discussion, with the branch (SO), the fraction organiser and Industrial Organiser. Comrades shouldn't free-lance. I believe we should encourage comrades to try to get onto National Executives, etc., again after full discussion.

Militant and the SWP

We can learn a lot by looking at the faults (and good points) of their TU work. Militant have an obsession with getting positions. For them leadership is almost the be-all-and-end-all. Now leadership is important. Scargill's leadership compared to any other TU leadership is an example of this. We should actively work for the election of 'Broad Left' slates in elections but we should be under no illusions

(as Militant sometimes are) that electing left leaders is enough. For a Left leadership in office without any back-up in the rank and file is almost worthless. Whilst Militant are shifting slightly their main emphasis is still on electoral politics.

The SWP, on the other hand, take the other extreme. They refuse to stand for leadership positions even when they are well-placed and have some base. They have also moved slightly away from their ridiculous position of a couple of years ago when any TU position took you away from the rank and file and therefore had to be avoided. They are still only fighting on one front and this has to be criticised.

We should attempt to combine the two approaches (see SO pamphlet on the Broad Lefts).

Broad Lefts and BLOC

Most of what needs to be said about Broad Lefts is written in our pamphlet but a few points are worth stressing. There is a Broad Left in most unions. In some there are two. They are almost exclusively controlled by Militant or the CP. The CP are trying to distance themselves from Militant in most cases. The most obvious case was when they deliberately split the CPSA Broad Left by organising a walk-out and an alternative Broad Left (called BL 84).

I don't have too clear a picture of the Militant/CP line-up in other PLs but would be interested to find out if comrades have any info .

In the SCPS (another civil service union) there is an 'open' BL controlled by M and a secret BL run by the CP. In general we would always favour and work in an open rather than secret BL. Alternative or secret BLs however cannot be just written off - the initial reason for people joining BL 84 in CPSA was a hatred for Militant politics, not a move to the right. However, BLs set up in competition to Militant usually move rightwards quite quickly.

Our comrades, in my opinion, should work in their respective BLs. We should do so in a serious way. This can mean working (or trying to work) with the Militant. This is a bitter pill we have to swallow. We should get involved in and set up where needs be local BL groups based on towns. This is a very useful way of making contacts with people in other TU branches. If we get into a good position with the independents Militant normally pull away, leaving us to it in much the same way as they do when we take a YS off them. The national conference of your BL should be treated as a priority.

BLOC is a Militant front. There are two reasons for this, first Militant's heavy priority of BL work and secondly the rest of the left's apathy in BL work. For all its warts and it has plenty, BLOC remains the only organisation linking rank and file trade unionists (providing we ignore the LCDTU and the All Trades Union Alliance/WRP). On this basis we should be involved in it. BLOC has the potential of becoming a rank and file movement. It will need a lot of hard work. We should be part of that work.

Joint work with like-minded individuals is obviously a priority in BLs where we have few members. It will be virtually impossible for us to have much independent focus with small numbers, so we need to form hard left groupings within the BLs in which we can work more efficiently against the M. It might be unavoidable that Socialist Action become involved in these groupings but it shouldn't worry us too much unless they go for a complete takeover.

TU/3

The SWP have had another turn and find themselves back in the BLs. We should approach them for joint work against the M where needs be. Joint work with the SWP can have its disadvantages as well: the Militant lump us all together when attacking 'sectarians and anarchists'. In general we should favour joint work rather than isolation.

Union conferences

Obviously the size of union conferences differs from under 100 to over 2000. The smaller conferences are, mainly dominated by older bureaucrats while the bigger ones are full of rank and file activists.

However, the Industrial Organiser/EC should ensure that all conferences are covered by leaflets/papers etc whether we have people there as delegates or not. All comrades should try and get to their union conference, preferably as delegates. The advantages of being at your union conference are obvious (contacts, interventions, etc.) and I can't see any disadvantages at all unlike taking on union positions.

Apologies

1. For the document being so messy and jumbled up.
2. For it stating things that most comrades are probably doing already.
3. For it generalising on my own experience in CPSA and seeking to make that the norm.
4. To the EC for stating things they are either doing or trying to do.

