

RESOLUTION - CAROLAN

The decision of the LP conference on the register and the right wing majority elected to the NEC have laid the basis for a sweeping purge in the LP. The issue now before the right wing is whether they can carry it out.

There is good reason to think that we can stop them and minimise the purge. The actual ine-up in the unions whose block vote ensured the Right's victory is not solidly for a full-scale purge; the CLPs, which will have to carry out any purge, voted 80% against the register and voted hard left for the NEC; the right wing itself wants to win the next election and therefore has a keen self-interest in not purging the party to the extent that it goes into the next election gutted; and a thorough purge of Militant alone would probably gut the party.

For these reasons we can hope to stop the purge and limit expulsions to perhaps half a dozen, or a couple of dozen, members of Militant. A firm line by the CLPs of opposition to any and all expulsion of socialists, and resistance for as long as necessary and by every means necessary, will make the cost of a full-scale, or even a large-scale, purge prohibitively high for the NEC.

We must therefore focus our efforts on resisting the purge all the way, to the point of having CLPs disaffiliated and 'disbanded', and on attempting to unite the broadest forces of the Left to coordinate this resistance. What happens next is still an open question. Struggle will decide; and we can be central to that struggle.

The register is a mechanism of witch-hunt and purge aimed specifically, for now, against Militant. We must stand by Militant and argue against any grouping in the LP registering and thus helping the NEC to isolate and purge Militant. The principle for us is to resist the witch-hunt and expulsions, and right now that means resisting the register.

We need also to assess the prospects for the immediate period ahead and work out some rough lines of guidance for how Marxists should relate to the LP in the new situation created by the decisions of Blackpool.

Given the Right's control of the organisational commanding heights of the party, it is certain that they will move to cut out a more or less large chunk of the Militant hard core from the party. Militant's declared willingness to go quietly, accepting expulsions under protest and not taking resistance to the point of forcing the NEC to disband CLPs, makes it virtually certain that there will be expulsions. Militant's attitude is likely to encourage the NEC to enlarge the purge.

It is most likely that the forces of the broader Left will comply with the register in the next few months, perhaps at a 'decent interval' after the purge of the Militant EB and others. The LCC has reversed itself and now opposes the register, perhaps in alarm at the strength of the right wing backlash. Nevertheless it is most likely that the register will become established as the norm governing the affairs of the Labour Party, and that the groups like LCC, CLPD etc will register or be registered by Mortimer.

We must fight against this happening with all our strength and ingenuity. The probability of success is very low, however. Most of the leftists see the struggle now as focusing on the resistance to expulsions, and the argument that we must accept the register as a democratic conference decision is being shown to have a great power on the softer Left, despite alarm at the right wing takeover of the NEC.

What attitude should co-thinkers in the LP adopt if or when the struggle against the establishment of the register subsides, and the register is firmly in place? The options are these: to regard the register as a question of principle, and therefore slide towards an acceptance of being automatically outlawed in the LP as and if the register is established. Or to resist the register, but if the resistance is defeated to attempt to comply with it and to gain registration as a means of coming to terms with the conditions of existence in the LP after Blackpool.

The first choice would be wrong for a number of reasons. The register is not a principle. The principle is to ~~register~~ and fight the purge, and to stay in the fight within the mass political party of the British ~~Labour~~ ^{now} movement.

There is no reason to believe that the Left in the LP is smashed; on the contrary, it displayed tremendous strength at the conference - our weakness was in the unions. All the pressures of capitalist crisis and reformist bankruptcy which we have identified as generating the convulsions in the LP will continue and intensify. Even should the LP left subside between now and the election, it will be forced to resume the struggle either against a new right wing Labour government or in face of a new defeat. It will resume the struggle on the basis of the experience of defeat at Blackpool by the block vote, and therefore the conditions exist for turning many of them also to our work in the unions. We must avoid getting isolated from that Left, and make the tactical and organisational adjustments necessary to survive.

In addition there is - it can be said dogmatically - no prospect for an independent revolutionary tendency in the next period competing with the LP. The crisis of the SWP is no accident. Labour is the mass alternative to the Tories; Labour will appear with a left and radical face (in broad labour movement terms) in the period ahead.

The presently active core of the forces that will make the revolutionary party of the future is now in the LP Left and the trade union Left. Our commitment to united front work, and to work to organise the broadest forces of that Left, to link both the LP and the union Left (and both with the specially oppressed), must remain central to the League. Our commitment to building the revolutionary party - the League - in the existing labour movement rules out passively accepting that Marxists in the LP should slide into automatically being outlawed.

The alternative is to fight the register until it is established (if eventually it is) and Militant's hard core is purged, and then go with groups like CLPD, LCC etc if they register. We should oppose the registration of the CLPD at its December conference, but in general it is unlikely that the Marxists can shape what happens. As a rough rule of thumb I suggest that we use the CLPD as a weathervane, and advise co-thinkers in the LP to register (or attempt to register) at the point that it does, or is automatically registered whether it applies or not.

The only matter of principle here is that we do not do this if by doing it we are ratting on Militant and making it easier to purge them. In general revolutionaries boycott a Parliament, or the register, so long as there is a chance of breaking, overthrowing, or sidetracking it; if that is not possible, then the revolutionaries have to find ways of working for their politics within the structures that we are not yet strong enough to overthrow.

It is impossible to anticipate precisely the future sequences and interactions of events. The above is intended as a crude outline of our approach. When and if we advise registration will have to be a matter of precise and concrete assessment.

It is improbable that the Marxists will be acceptable on the register (though it is not impossible - that too will depend to some extent on the combativity of the Left and its success or otherwise in limiting the purge). Irrespective of that, however, it is important that they apply to register if the conditions require it as above. If they are refused they can campaign among the broad Left on the matter. It will make the difference between fighting every inch of the way against their exclusion, thus protecting their major forces, and passively accepting exclusion. Politically for the Marxists it means a commitment to continue the orientation to the mass political party of the class, a commitment to attempting to find means of continuing to organise the broad Left (for example, in a campaign against outlawing the Marxists).

In the event that the Marxists are outlawed by whatever process, my proposal would be that the Marxists maintain the paper and its organisation as at present and also seek alliances to create a new publication that can play the role of

left wing organiser that the present paper has played at its best. In general they must create alternative means of continuing their work (as in Kinnell's resolution, etc.) This would obviously be a transitional phase of our work. At a certain point, after the election perhaps, we would have to assess where we are at and perhaps rationalise publications.

RESOLUTION - KENDALL plus AMENDMENTS - PARSONS

We reaffirm:

a) The League considers the work of building a revolutionary party as its primary task.

AMENDMENT: The League exists in order to build a revolutionary party.

b) This can only be done in line with the needs and development of the class struggle and cannot in any sense be counterposed to it, as sectarian Marxists counterposed it over the decades.

c) Therefore the party will be built within the existing labour movement while maintaining its political, ideological and organisational autonomy. To waver from this is to court disaster. To attempt to counterpose any other conception of the party is to ignore the lessons of the last 20 years and to collapse into an SWP conception which sees the labour movement being built anew from the ground up.

d) Our basic task, the prerequisite for the party, is to reorientate, politically re-educate and reorganise the existing labour movement. The struggle in the political wing of the movement, the LP, remains with the fight in the unions the central terrain for this struggle. Therefore we reaffirm the centrality of the LP for the foreseeable period ahead in the work of building the revolutionary party. The forces that will build that party are in the existing movement, the reformist workers in the TUs and LP who want to fight. They will be forced to rethink their political ideas because of the crisis of capitalism and the bankruptcy of both right and left reformism, which is leading to the break-up of Labourism.

Fresh forces, women, blacks and gays will be won to the revolutionary party on the basis of our core activity in the political and industrial wings of the labour movement, and won to our perspectives for renovating it.

AMENDMENT: replace this sentence by: Fresh forces, youth, women, blacks and gays, will be won to the revolutionary party on the basis of our programme and more crucially to our struggle to implement that programme. Central to our programme is the orientation to both the political and industrial wings of the the labour movement.

Here and now the loyalty of the class to its own organisations has been proved, the development of the class struggle has taken the line of transforming and reorganising rather than establishing new organisations. It is by basing ourselves on that that we will unify the working class and those doubly oppressed in society as it is that victory which provides the prerequisite for socialism.

On the industrial front, the betrayal of ASLEF, the failure of the bureaucracy to lead an adequate struggle in the NHS dispute, has meant that these leaders are being thrown into sharp relief for many militants. The upturn in the industrial struggle and the decision of the SWP to turn its back on these developments puts us in a pivotal position to recruit industrial workers to the WSL now and lay the basis for a rank and file movement in the period ahead. These militants have to be won to the perspective of transforming the labour movement as outlined above. This necessarily includes the need to link, via the revolutionary party, the TU struggle with the LP and the fight of those doubly oppressed.

The work of the broad paper over the last 4 years has been exemplary here

and will serve as our model in the LP and TU movement for the foreseeable future. For this period revolutionaries must stay with the left wing to help it evolve, to link together the different strands of militancy, to politically develop them and strengthen them organisationally for the fight.

AMENDMENT: Add: To the extent that we fail to demonstrate the possibility of reflecting in the mass organisations the aspirations of those hitherto ignored by the organised movement, we will fail to mobilise the vast forces which can be a catalyst for the transformation which we seek. Moreover, the isolated and sporadic mobilisations of the super-oppressed layers will never find consistent and organised forms, will be dissipated, and the consequent divisions in the mass movement as a whole will have disastrous results.

e) The League will fight to defeat right and soft left attempts to exclude us from the political wing of the labour movement and from the political process in which the future of the labour movement is being decided. To that end we will adopt Lenin's advice in Left Wing Communism and adopt the subterfuge and evasive action to avoid such a dangerous exclusion. Concretely that will mean adapting the organisational form of our work when and where necessary. We will also resist any sectarian tendencies - it is probably inevitable that they will develop in our own ranks - to 'go out with a bang', banners flying, declaring the revolutionary party. As comrade Booth put it, that is to throw in the towel with a good consoling emblem emblazoned on it. The working class in Britain, though they are unaware of it, have had ten years of Marxists giving up on them and viewing their struggles from the sidelines rather than fighting them. For the League, the serious work of building the nucleus of the revolutionary party is found in the labour movement as it is today, and in no sense can we afford to turn our backs on that movement and the struggle now going on.