

60 Baseless Myths, Lies and Legends about the current wave of expulsions and the Democratic Centralist Faction.

So much confusion has been deliberately sown by the Majority over the background to their expulsion of 35 former members of the disbanded minority Faction, that a directory to the myths lies and legends of the expulsions is long overdue. For the sake of clarity and brevity I have boiled down the list to a working total of 60, and grouped the main myths and legends under four main "streams" of argument. They are also numbered consecutively for ease of reference.

My chief hope is that this list will not prove to be completely superseded by a fresh crop of replacement myths and lies between now and June 30. On past form, however, a second volume of this work may well prove to be necessary.

SECTION A: THE EXPULSIONS AND THE CONSTITUTION.

(1) The expelled were duly charged and expelled under the Constitution.

In fact they were suspended with no advance warning by an NC meeting; they have never been charged with any breach of the Constitution or any specific "disruption" of the League. 34 of the 35 have been denied any right to appear or defend themselves against expulsion. The Majority has never even tried to prove that most of those expelled have in any way breached the Constitution. The one criterion for expulsion was having at one point been a member of a disbanded minority Faction. Moreover the WSL constitution makes no provision for mass, collective expulsions; yet those expelled have been denied their individual rights.

(2) Democratic centralist norms have been upheld by the expulsions.

The test of rights under the Constitution is not the flowery words defending them at times when they are not being invoked, but whether they apply in practice in testing circumstances. The expulsions have shown that minority rights do not apply; the Majority has violated the WSL Constitution to drive out an oppositional minority. That is not defending democratic centralism.

(3) The Control Commission found against Smith's complaints.

In fact the Control Commission - meeting despite obstruction and pressure from the Executive not to hear Smith's complaints - affirmed Smith's right to lodge complaints, proposed further investigation of fines and lapsings, recommended that NC and EC reaffirm the policy of open access to the press, and only rejected one complaint from Smith: that the postponement of the League's annual conference to the Autumn was unconstitutional.

(4) To conduct mass expulsions, tantamount to a split, is the simple prerogative of the NC majority.

This is linked to the stange view of the present NC majority, that the endorsement of certain limited political documents by a majority at the 1983 Conference implies automatic endorsement of organisational moves aimed at crushing opposition on other questions over a year later. Whether or not the movements should be split on political lines is a matter for the whole membership. Only a cowardly and bureaucratic leadership would invoke such a fraudulent "mandate" to excuse mass expulsions.

(5) The June 1984 Conference, having resisted demands for a Special Conference, will be a regular, normal, annual conference, with "business as usual".

The derisory preconference discussion - with no serious documents tabled by the leadership, and no political discussion on the situation in Britain or internationally, indicates that if this really IS business as usual then political life within the rump post-expulsion WSL will be particularly stultifying and shallow. There is plainly a real problem of political development in the group which will not be resolved by a botched and hasty "annual conference" followed by another period of two-man leadership.

(6) The NC is implementing 1983 Conference policies by expelling the opposition, who have obstructed the work.

No evidence has been produced to show that the minority in any way obstructed the work or failed to implement the line of the movement adopted last year. But there is plenty of evidence that the EC and NC Majority have disregarded Conference policies. All 3 stages of the 1983 Conference were plainly opposed to a split in the WSL. And although by common consent a series of "party-building" proposals were passed by the August Conference, an amendment from Cunliffe opposing Carolan's "norm" of "one-person management" and calling for Branch and area committees along the lines proposed in IB92 was carried by a large majority. It has not been implemented. Nor have other conference resolutions - on the WSL magazine, on Wiganisation, on the building of broad groups (whatever happened to the SKA?) and the prioritisation of youth work. These have been abandoned by decision of the Majority, despite the decisions of Conference.

(7) The Majority set up an Editorial Board in January.

Nobody from the Majority has challenged my chronicle of the first couple of months' existence of the "Editorial Board" set out in IB78. In practice the "EB" barely even went through the motions of discussing the content or controlling the balance of the press. Cunliffe has been banned from writing for the paper since the New Year. There is currently NO functioning EB for the paper - nor indeed for the (proposed) SX magazine.

(8) Constitutional rights may be waived at the discretion of the Majority of the day - particularly during a miners' strike.

This is a recurrent theme of Carolan's responses to the signatures (totalling nearly half the pre-expulsion membership) both before and after the expulsions. But if a Constitutional right hinges upon the goodwill of those already in control, is it really a right at all? The Constitution is the central axis of the discipline of our organisation: the rights conceded to minorities are a component of this disciplined structure. There can be no arbitrary, unilateral limitations on such rights - especially when the limitations are designed to force the expulsion of a sizable minority of the group.

(9) "Disruption" is sufficient charge.

"Disruption" is a charge which is easy for a leadership to level, but almost impossible to disprove. But to have any substance, disruption must arise from specific, concrete actions which breach the Constitution or

flout the discipline of the organisation. This was the case, for example, with the Internationalist Faction, expelled last Spring after a deliberate, public breach of WSL discipline in an international meeting. No such charges have ever been brought against the expelled comrades: only the generalised, unsubstantiated slander about "disruption."

SECTION B: MISREPRESENTATION OF THE EXPELLED FACTION AND THE OLD WSL.

(10) Smith and Jones regarded themselves as a designated "worker leadership".

This is a monstrous fabrication by the Carolan/Kinnell leadership. Carolan even at one point admits that Jones emphatically denied ever hearing the term "worker leadership" used before. Maybe the term was not used, admits Carolan: but his response is simply "Never mind" - and more of the same lies.

In fact, the term "worker leadership" in the sense implied by Carolan and Kinnell was never and has never been used by any member of the old WSL. Even Jagger must admit this to be the case. Nor do the comrades hold the views attributed to them on this matter by Carolan/Kinnell.

What is true is that the old WSL, especially Smith and Jones, placed a high priority on the fight to draw working class comrades into the leadership of the organisation, and to guard against leading bodies becoming the exclusive preserve of petty bourgeois intellectuals and footloose individuals. We could debate whether or not they were successful in their quest; we could debate whether or not the matter is one for concern. But what is beyond dispute is that though themselves working class comrades, Jones and Smith in no way saw themselves then or now as any designated "worker leadership".

(11) Full-timers in the old WSL were "orally blackjacked as petty bourgeois if they got out of line" (Carolan, IB89)

Nonsense. Even Jagger (the only old WSLer to have been in any way convinced by Carolan) would have to deny this ludicrous allegation.

(12) Carolan has a serious and worthwhile analysis of the regime inside the old WSL.

Even Jagger has to admit that much of what Carolan has written about the old WSL is untrue. But Jagger has also claimed in an NC meeting that Carolan has made a serious effort at evaluating the old WSL. He should tell the movement just how useful such an "analysis" really is, based as it is so extensively on secondhand and malicious gossip, on fabrication and blind guesswork. Where is Jagger's critical contribution to this so-called balance-sheet? How are the large number of WSL comrades who never knew or heard of the old WSL - many of whom never met or discussed with Smith or Jones either - to distinguish fact from fiction if Jagger withholds this information?

(13) Smith "left the factory" in Cowley to become "a demoralised ex-worker dilettante" and "write his memoirs". (Carolan, IBs 88, 89, 96, and elsewhere)

Smith was brutally victimised from the plant by BL management with the connivance of the TGWU bureaucracy, after 24 years as a leading shop floor militant. His book is an account of the trade union organisation in the plant since the war and the crucial role played by Trotskyists in that work over

the past 20 years. Far from being self-indulgent personal "memoirs", the book is a documentary history of part of our political movement and an important part of the Labour movement. Carolan has always viewed this project (which began before the fusion and long before the victimisation) with undiluted and undisguised factional hostility. But surely any serious comrade would welcome this type of book: when complete it will be the nearest thing to a British equivalent to Farrell Dobbs' exciting four volumes on the US Teamster struggles of the 1930s. Does Carolan regard those books as "memoirs"?

(14) Smith and Jones claimed that the Majority on the EC should defer to them.

As worker comrades without the intellectual training and agility of Kinnell or the leisure for preparation enjoyed by Carolan, Smith and Jones tried to ensure that debates took place when they had had some chance to prepare. This should be seen as seeking equal rights rather than seeking deference. The problem became the more acute because of the selective and factional way in which Kinnell would minute discussions.

(15) The Minority operated a "federal" relationship with the Centre in the independent "duchy" of Oxford.

Oxford comrades sold their quotas of papers, carried out nationally-agreed policies of the WSL, participated in campaigns often (as on Palestine or Ireland) more effectively than "Majority"-run branches. If not, why have they not been charged? Minority comrades have also repeatedly proposed coordinated national campaigns - one of which was the September 17 SX Conference. Often it has been the Majority that has blocked unifying national campaigns, and Majority branches that have mobilised least and latest for League SX events.

(16) Smith as Industrial Organiser played little or no role in the NGA dispute.

Firstly it should be pointed out that Smith never formally took on full responsibility as Industrial Organiser. A major reason for this was his responsibility for the Cowley work - for which Majority comrades have had little time or enthusiasm.

The period of the NGA dispute was also the most decisive final stage in the running of our (League dominated) election slates for the leadership of the two main Cowley plants. In the event, Jones nearly won his election for convenor against a decades-entrenched right wing bureaucracy; and in the other plant, we secured a great victory with the election of the left candidate as convenor and the election of two of our comrades as deputy convenors - a position stronger for us than at any time since Smith was victimised as Deputy Convenor in 1974.

Smith was central to this work which - by any reasonable stretch of the imagination - must be seen as industrial organising. But once again Carolan is so hostile to the BL work that in his "book" these achievements count for nothing, and Smith should instead have supplied one extra body on the Warrington picket line.

(17) The expelled 35 rejected a perfectly reasonable NC resolution on March 10.

Why not read that NC resolution again? It is couched in the familiar terms of "will you stop beating your wife?" Nobody could simply accept that resolution without implicitly pleading guilty to a series of implied allegations. The 35 did however reply that they would continue to remain within the Constitution. Of course their reply was

not the decisive factor. Kinnell had already admitted in a SW London branch meeting that there was no reply which the Faction could give to the Resolution that would prevent their being expelled.

(18) Evidence of "federalism" in Oxford was that Carolan's proposal in the Autumn of 1981 to add Piggot to the new parity Executive was "vetoed" by the Oxford area committee.

Carolan's proposal was mystifying from the outset, and was never actually endorsed by the EC members from the old WSL. Many comrades, some from Oxford, opposed the move as undemocratic, and saw it as an alarming precedent for the new EC. Why Carolan should go to such lengths to portray Smith and Jones, both factory workers, as "inexperienced", "amateur" leaders of the WSL not fit to be regarded as equals of the old-ICL leadership, while at the same time making a song and dance out of his attempt to instal another equally "amateur" and less experienced cde on the EC against the wishes of the old WSL comrades remains an unsolved mystery of the fusion.

(19) The old WSL leadership entered the fusion on a factional basis, boasting that it would "smash the Pabloite ICL".

Again Jagger knows this is untrue. The rejection soon after the fusion of Carolan's unexpected proposal to add Piggot to the EC - which would have given the old WSL a built-in majority - was simply one of a number of indications that the old-WSL cdes did not pursue a factional line in the fusion. (Would Carolan have made the proposal if they had?)

Instead, when the old WSL conference in May 1981 voted in favour of fusion, Cunliffe, who advocated a harder, factional approach to the fusion, was roundly condemned by the remainder of the WSL leadership and by many of the WSL rank and file. Far from electing a factional NC, that same conference elected among its body of representatives for a new, parity NC, a number of cdes who were closest to and most influenced politically by the old ICL (notably Booth and Parsons). Only one leading cde from the old WSL ever referred to the old ICL as "Pabloite"; that was Morrow - who referred to absolutely everybody he disagreed with as "Pabloite" (including me). Smith, Jones and other leading cdes vociferously opposed Morrow's view - to the extent of seriously downplaying the differences that remained at the time of fusion.

(20) Smith and Jones did not argue politically in Marxist terms during the Malvinas debate: they simply invoked "old WSL clan loyalties".

This is just another way of saying that Carolan/Kinnell disagreed with the arguments put forward by Smith, Jones and others, and as usual chose to castigate their opponents as "non-Marxist". The distortions which were generated by the present Majority cdes during that debate could fill another one of these directories.

Comrades should check back to the documents. You will find few references to the tradition or culture of the old WSL; but plenty of material attempting to analyse - right or wrong - the actual situation of the war and the issues involved. The event had of course brought out unexpectedly sharp differences of position and analytical method which had not surfaced in pre-fusion discussions. Obviously both sides began to look with some alarm at the new problems in the fused organisation and to question whether they had made a wise choice in fusing. This polarisation took place on both sides: but it was the old ICL which took the drastic and

divisive step of convening a secret meeting of its NC members, during the Summer School of 1982.

And how does Carolan explain that an unadulterated "appeal to old WSL clan loyalties" successfully persuaded enough members of the old ICL to procure a one-vote majority for the Smith-Jones line?

(21) The minority had privileged access to the paper.

Not true. Minority comrades were less likely to be asked by Kinnell or Carolan to contribute to the paper, less likely to be followed up on requests, and more likely to have their articles drastically altered or left out. From very early on in the fusion, however, it was made clear that Cunliffe, though a Joint Editor, had no right to make any changes in articles from Carolan.

In reality the minority had less rights and less access to the paper than almost any non-member labour movement "dignitary".

(22) The minority objected to fair political criticism.

The minority objected - with good reason - to the intemperate tone and style of public polemical replies to their articles and letters. In some cases they responded in kind - much to Carolan's delight (as on Ireland). They objected to provocative and misleading "introductions" being appended to their articles; they objected to their articles being singled out for prolonged public attack while far more politically dangerous material - so long as it was contributed by "guest" non-members - was allowed to go unchallenged. In general the minority objected to the practice of conducting in public the kinds of debate that should properly be staged first on an Editorial Board or on leading committees and through the internal bulletins of the WSL.

(23) The Minority Faction were responsible for "cynical jibes against the organisation" to new members. (IB 101, etc)

The fact is that after Smith was victimised out of the Cowley plant - a major blow against trade union strength in that factory and against our organisation - it was Majority supporters (from Wallasey and elsewhere) who made up gleeful songs about it; the same sentiment can now be seen clearly in Carolan's documents. (See IBs 88FF) It was Whetting and other majority supporters who from the summer camp of 1982 set out to denigrate and slander the work of our movement in Cowley. More recently, a gauge of the kind of respect Majority supporters have for the WSL was shown when in a North West Aggregate a new young recruit, 3 weeks in the movement, was allowed time and again to refer to the League as "The Weasel", while Kinnell giggled in embarrassment. Presumably since this arrogant new entrant was supporting the expulsions, he was allowed to ridicule the organisation.

If the Majority have comparable examples of "jibes" by the minority, they should document them. If not they should just shut up.

SECTION C: THE MAJORITY AND THE TRADITION OF THE OLD ICL .

(24) The minority Faction was an unacceptable "party within a party" .

From day one of the fusion, the old ICL core leadership formed an undeclared but tight-knit factional group more akin to a Masonic lodge than a political grouping. They refused to criticise each other for even the most blatant breaches of discipline or to break ranks on any issue of significance, no matter how unhappy individuals may have looked and sounded. Rachel L. was allowed to behave in unhindered bohemian fashion, while Carolan waned in and out of editorial work on the paper with no accountability to leading bodies, protected by their fellow faction-members. As the polarisation in the League intensified, this secret faction convened at least one clandestine meeting of ex-ICL NC members (Summer School 1982), and this same, undeclared, factional grouping convened a secret meeting of trusted NC members to finalise the resolution for the current expulsions. They have operated throughout as a "party within a party". Smith and Jones on the contrary made no secret of invoking their rights under the constitution to form a declared Faction. The Majority preferred duplicity and manoeuvre.

(25) The Faction, unlike the Majority, sees a fixed, designated "worker leadership" of Smith and Jones.

The old WSL operated a collective leadership. One of the problems we faced in the factional atmosphere of the post-fusion WSL was the breakdown of this collective working relationship; none of us had seen ourselves or operated as self-sufficient individuals. Quite the opposite is true of the two-person Majority leadership, who regard themselves as the only "Marxists" in the world, and make no attempt whatever to establish a collective working relationship with others either on Editorial policy (hence the lack of an Editorial Board) or on day-to-day political direction (real decision-making is taken into the hands of a tiny group). What evidence is there of anyone outside the tiny Carolan/Kinnell circle playing any serious political role in developing positions and policies of the group?

(26) Politics and tradition stand higher than the Constitution.

The defence of the politics of the movement is of course a paramount question. But our democratic centralist constitution is no trimming; it is also part of our politics. It shows the way we must fight to translate our politics into the practical language of intervention, leadership and party-building in the class struggle. You cannot defend the programme by destroying the fabric of the party, or tearing up the Constitution which protects that fabric. To do so is the ultimate in sectarian logic. Yet it is a recurrent and central theme in Carolan's argument. For example:

"Suppose the NC had acted outside the Constitution and the NC had dispensed with democratic procedures. That would be secondary" (IB 110)

Or:

our ideas "are worth any price we must pay ... including the lives of everybody in the organisation," (IB 110)

Elsewhere in the world movement we have

seen such idealist attitude result in "groups" of messianic dogmatists containing half a dozen people or less. The degenerate TILC in its final stages embraced a two-person sectarian "Chilean section" that had descended from an endless process of defending "ideas" through splits. There is nothing in Carolan's present method to distinguish him from these boneheads.

(27) The expelled minority are not Marxists

Here again we see the sectarian logic of Carolan's trajectory. In his view he (and possibly Kinnell) are the only Marxists. Hence anyone opposing him and Kinnell must not be Marxists. At best, they are a variety of "centrist". The world Trotskyist movement is this at the stroke of a pen reduced to a core of two people in Islington - backed up by a wider grouping of trustees and protégés. There is no room in such a world-view for honest differences and debate: since these two have a monopoly on Marxism, all those who disagree, whether comparatively little (like the expelled cdes or the DCF) or a lot (the USFI, OCRFI, Morenists, etc) fall into the same general category of "non-Marxists", deserving Kinnell's sweeping label of "absolutely useless". The relative health of a cde or grouping is assessed according to its apparent malleability to Kinnell and Carolan's views. Hence the certainty of permanent international isolation and internal sterility of the rump WSL if the expulsions stand.

(28) But every other tendency is useless. .

The post-war Trotskyist movement has been fragmented and confused for decades. One unhealthy by-product of that fragmentation is the lack of any significant pool of common experience in conditions of widely different levels of class struggle in Europe, the USA, Latin America and other (all too few) areas of substantial Trotskyist activity. To assert on the basis of long-distance assessment from an isolated group in imperialist Britain that NO tendency anywhere in the world has ANYTHING positive to offer - and therefore that the whole world movement must be rebuilt from scratch in Islington - is not only unwarranted arrogance but a recipe for liquidating any real international work. True enough, that has already happened.

(29) But the WSL is not isolated: there is SOME international work going on, maybe held up by the minority or the miners' strike.

The WSL is completely isolated. There is no significant international work going on with any significant tendency. The last time international work was done, it was done almost exclusively by comrades now expelled or in the DCF. Far from freeing the movement to do international work, the expulsions will simply hammer the final nail into its coffin.

Since the break-up of TILC in Spring 1983 the NC has barely if at all discussed aspects of the international class struggle. It has adopted no resolutions, commissioned no theoretical work or education, conducted no worthwhile correspondence and prepared no new initiatives. Instead a Majority motion last November looked only to a "mini-TILC" involving the American WSL and the Australian Socialist Fight. Since then there has been no work to implement the proposal, while the expulsions will antagonise and drive off the Americans, and the Australians are fused with the Castroite group there.

Kinnell's annual jaunts to the Lutte Ouvriere Fete in Paris are therefore an unconvincing fig-leaf to cover our isolation. In any event he can have no serious perspective