

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My chief hope is that this list will not prove to be completely superseded by a fresh crop of replacement myths and lies between now and June 30.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 movement 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 SXA?) 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 Whettling 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

of discussions or links with these "useless" groupings.

(30) The ICL leaders attempted an honest fusion in 1981

So claims Carolan. But he lacks any real evidence to support him. Kinnell under repeated questioning has failed to deny that he and Carolan even at the time of fusion in 1981 held the view that the old WSL cdes were "not Marxists" - in other words they were a centrist organisation, against which it would be not only legitimate but almost mandatory for self-designated "Marxists" to employ factional "entry" and disruptive tactics insofar as they could not win their objectives by persuasion. If the ICL leaders viewed the old WSL in that way, then an honest fusion was NEVER A POSSIBILITY, and Carolan's rhetoric at the time was no more than a cynical smokescreen.

(31) The majority leadership has been consistent on the characterisation of the old WSL

In the mid-1970s the old ICL characterised the newly-formed WSL as "Healyite". By 1978, this analysis was expanded to brand the WSL as "sectarian philistine". At the time of fusion in Summer 1981 this appeared to change. A carefully-worded platform document drafted by Carolan (seemingly straightforward at the time) recognised both organisations not as "Marxist" but as "revolutionary".

The distinction is obvious in retrospect, but was not noticed then. But now again in April 1984 Kinnell is clearly stating that the old WSL cdes are not and were not Marxists. There is a consistency here: consistent with a self-designated "Marxist" leadership using underhand tactics and the rigmarole of an "honest" fusion to enter and destroy an opponent group. But it is NOT consistent with what many old ICLers plainly believed to be a real fusion; for with the way the fusion was seen and prepared for honestly in the old WSL.

(32) Splits are "the small change of revolutionary politics" - (Carolan)

Splits might be the small change, if fusions and political development were the main currency. Unfortunately for Carolan's argument, his school of politics is proving itself more adept in the last 10 years at Splits than fusions. Splits are therefore not expanding but whittling down the size of Carolan's dogmatic grouping. The present expulsions would reduce the size of the rump WSL to less than 130; smaller than either of the 2 pre-fusion groups. Normally if you add together a lot of small change you can make up a worthwhile sum. But if the WSL were to carry out a few more "splits" like the present expulsions, Carolan and Kinnell will be able to convene future conferences in the front room at the Centre.

(33) But this is just one episode, an unfortunate but isolated failure. There will be other, successful fusions later on, once the Smith group are out of the way.

FUSIONS WITH WHOM? With more "non-Marxists"? With adherents of the other "absolutely useless" international groupings? What kind of fusions would they be - even assuming that the leaderships of such groupings were gullible enough to fall a third time for Carolan's cynical "fusion" tactic? With the broad SX and WX groups largely wound up, and with our MO work lacking both strategy and direction (no model resolutions to this year's MO conference!) there seems little reason to anticipate new currents, layers or groupings moving towards the League. Fusions are out of the question for the foreseeable future. The prospect is - at best - one of long-

term individual recruitment, a one-by-one, brick-by-brick scenario which Carolan scathingly dismissed as sectarian in 1981.

(34) The expulsions will not affect the WSL's ability to recruit. "Only the hostile and malicious will fail to understand" (Carolan, IB 110)

DON'T KID YOURSELF. Mass, bureaucratic expulsions of comrades whose record in the labour movement is beyond question can do nothing but sully the reputation of the WSL. Nobody needs to be malicious to be opposed to such practices, though no doubt our political opponents will seek to cash in. We cannot recruit in a vacuum. Other left groups will be aware of the expulsions and will make sure that any of their contacts who may be sympathetic to us is fully informed. This will compound the disadvantage of size which we already face in competing for recruits with Militant, SWP, Socialist Action.

If the expulsions are confirmed, then plainly the expelled members will also be obliged to explain themselves to the workers' movement in building a new grouping.

The result will be to restrict our potential recruitment to those who - with more or less information available - approve of bureaucratic expulsions (like the new young "Weasel" in Stoke (see Point 23, above), or to those who know little of the left in general, and join the WSL in blissful ignorance. Our work is not well-gearred to reaching such fresh forces: but in either case recruitment will be severely restricted, and the character of the group profoundly altered. If Carolan wishes to dispute this, then he should tell the movement: where are all these super-hard Bolshevik non-members who - even while

Carolan fails to convince some of his oldest comrades, will so readily "understand" his need to expel 35 political opponents?

(35) "We are not the sitting duck the WRP were in 1974." (Carolan, IB110)

More whistling in the dark. Of course the programmatic differences in the present WSL expulsions are in no way the same as they were when 200 oppositionists around Alan Thornett were expelled by Gerry Healy from the much larger WRP in 1974. But this does not make Carolan's case any more defensible. On the contrary, mass political expulsions in violation of the Constitution are much more easy to comprehend in an organisation in which sectarianism is openly rampant and which openly denies the right of tendency and faction than in one which claims to be non-sectarian and to uphold Bolshevik principles. There is no excuse for the WSL expulsions. By carrying them out, Carolan has joined the Gerry Healy school of "democratic centralism". Anyone with eyes to see will spot it.

(36) These are not expulsions, but a split "of the Faction's making, not ours" (Carolan, IB110)

All of the initiatives leading up to the expulsions were taken by the Majority. The March 10 "will you stop beating your wife?" resolution from the NC to the Faction was drawn up by Carolan. Kinnell and others had made it quite clear that NO answer to that resolution would be regarded as acceptable. The expulsion resolution was drawn up by a secret meeting of Majority supporters, who also decided to reject the two calls for a Special Conference, and to brush aside the Faction's response to the March 10 ultimatum. THE MAJORITY took the decisions. THEY must accept their responsibility. It was not a "split" in which the membership were involved, but top-level, bureaucratic expulsions.

(37) No conference of the old ICL took us into the fusion: we don't need a conference to break it now.

The lack of collective involvement and discussion among ICL members prior to the fusion

comes as little surprise in the light of experiences since. But it cannot be an argument for denying democratic rights to the present-day membership of the WSL, many of whom joined after the 1981 fusion.

But this line of argument arises from a significant and largely ignored school of thought in today's WSL: the unconvinced ICL members who from day one of the fusion were hostile to it and to the old WSL. The existence of such an influential body of opinion - dominant in such areas as Islington, Merseyside, Nottingham, South West London and elsewhere, is proof that the factionalism since 1981 has not by any means all derived from the openly-declared minority Faction(s).

(38) The Majority's main error was in not being tough enough.

By floating this crazy line now, Kinnell and Carolan can don the rather unconvincing mask of self-criticism while in fact pandering to the most backward-looking backwoods sentiment of the anti-fusion ICLers (see point 37 above). In reality there was never a moment from the day of fusion onwards in which the core of the Majority did not act as a hardline secret faction within the group.

(39) The Majority are consistent fighters for Bolshevik norms and discipline. That is the ICL tradition.

Yet at the time of fusion the new EC found it impossible to impose any discipline over the maverick conduct of Rachel L, a core leadership ICL cde whose every action was defended by the Majority leaders until the very day she decided to resign from the movement. Similarly Carolan himself, protected by the factional unity of his old core colleagues, played fast and loose for months as a "full-timer" without any defined responsibilities, absenting himself for weeks on end from leadership meetings in tantrums over his personal status. More recently, Carolan's own undisciplined conduct has cost the movement hundreds of pounds in unnecessary rent payments.

Nor do ICL-dominated branches have any superior track record of adherence to central discipline since fusion. Some are amongst the most "federalist" of all - notably the Glasgow and Wallasey branches. Carolan's "Bolshevism" is simply hypocritical double-talk. What he means is discipline for his opponents, but licence for himself and his supporters.

(40) Carolan had an article on Poland "suppressed in December 1981."

Nothing was suppressed. All that was demanded - by half the then Executive Committee - was that Carolan submit the text of his proposed analytical article on Poland after martial law for discussion on the EC or EB prior to its publication. He arrogantly refused point blank to do so; as far as anyone knows, the article was never actually written. No text has ever been produced.

(41) Carolan proposed a calm, extended discussion on Ireland.

EVERYBODY agreed to hold such a discussion. Carolan was then asked by everybody to produce a written perspectives document as the basis for a series of meetings and for written debate. He never did so. Instead, he continued to write increasingly lengthy and tendentious articles which he insisted be published in SX. Eventually, as comrades walked into the 3rd stage of the 1983 conference last August, they were handed, and asked to vote upon, a document reflecting Carolan's views on Ireland. This was still not a rounded perspectives document, but is confined to the narrow question of federalism and the six counties. Far from seeking seriously to promote a calm, extended, internal debate,

Carolan preferred to provoke angry, ill-considered public exchanges in our press, and then to force comrades to consider and vote on a new text at short notice last August.

(42) The fusion first broke down on the women's commission, where neither Carolan nor Kinnell was involved. - (Kinnell)

This is absolute hypocrisy. Kinnell and Carolan - occasionally swallowing their visible embarrassment - stood foursquare behind Rachel L., a core member of the old WF/ICL, and notorious for her high-handed and bureaucratic, individualistic behaviour. Rachel L. had always rejected any notion of fusing the work amongst women of the two old organisations; in her view fusion meant simply a takeover bid, with "business as usual" in WX, to the exclusion of anyone from the old WSL. Without support from Kinnell and Carolan, Rachel L. could not have adhered to such a line. She acted as their factional representative in those meetings. They must be held politically responsible for the destruction of that work and partly responsible for the political destruction of Rachel L. herself under hostile pressure from the feminist movement.

(43) The expulsions have now cleared the decks for discussion. The debate on the General Strike shows that honest differences can be discussed and that Carolan and Kinnell are not bureaucrats.

The Majority have gone out of their way to present a "democratic" face to comrades over the General Strike issue in the press, while still in practice manipulating the time of the debate and the voting on the issue at the NC in order to give themselves the maximum opportunity to defeat the opposing line.

The reality is that individuals holding particular "differences" represent no problem to the majority and (for instance Keith with his private "differences" over international work) can remain in a more or less closet existence for years. What the majority will not tolerate is a vocal, organised opposition which dares to challenge their basic methods as well as their politics.

There is every indication that discussion on the post-expulsion NC will be a ritualistic and largely sterile process, in which the problem will be to get comrades to contribute at all. The decks have been "cleared" at the expense of throwing many of the active crew members overboard.

(44) Support for some positions of IB 92 does not mean you should vote for it.

Here once again we have the double standards at work. On the one hand, Carolan and co. are prepared to forge an unscrupulous bloc with ANYONE - no matter what their politics, their level of activity or their views on Leninism - who is prepared - for whatever reason - to vote for the expulsions. And they willingly try to pull doubtful ex-ICLers and the hapless Jagger into line with the argument that you must "vote for your politics" (in other words, if you voted for IB45 in April 1983, you were - whether you knew it or not, voting at the same time for expulsions of 35 comrades over 12 months later!).

On the other hand, when comrades express political agreement with the lines of the DCF Platform or IB92, they are warned that they may have disagreements on other "political" issues with this that or the other DCF member, and that therefore they should not vote for their politics, but should vote for Carolan's politics instead. Comrades should read the DCF platform and IB92 - and vote for or against them on their merits as statements expressing and addressing the political problems of our

organisation and pointing to the need for democratic centralism as the backbone of a healthy organisation.

(45) Unity with the expelled members is impossible.

It certainly is impossible along Carolan's sectarian path of seeking to bludgeon opponents into submission. It is impossible to impose a bureaucratic straitjacket on them. But, given the type of changes spelled out in IB92, and a change in the majority control of League leading bodies, it WOULD be possible to unite in a democratic centralist relationship and a common party with the expelled 35 - and with many more people as well!

SECTION D: MISREPRESENTATION OF THE DEMOCRATIC CENTRALIST FACTION (DCF).

(46) The DCF want four Conferences a year. Why else should they argue for regular national aggregates?

This allegation says a lot more about the Majority than it does about the DCF. Majority comrades cannot see any purpose in political discussion that does not focus upon and end in a VOTE, a factional line-up.

For them, therefore, national aggregates can only seriously be proposed if they are tantamount to conferences - complete with pre-conference discussion and votes.

Of course the DCF does not propose four conferences a year. Our proposal in IB92 means just what it says: national membership meetings to provide a forum for political discussion, mobilisation, and education for comrades otherwise isolated in small branches and areas. Only on specially-designated occasions, and with proper advance notice and preparation, would such aggregates take votes on issues.

What is so alarming about that?

(47) The DCF's only demand on the Editorial Board is that it meet separately from the EC.

Wrong! The DCF demands that there BE a real Editorial Board, embracing a range of opinion within the League, and allocating sufficient time and energy to its meetings in order adequately to prepare and discuss each issue of the paper. This cannot be done as a subordinate item on the agenda of an EC meeting. Indeed it has not been done since the so-called "EB" arrangement was set up in January. Carolan/Kinnell have chosen to make this a point of principle because Carolan as Editor is absolutely opposed to being in any way accountable to leading bodies of the movement.

(48) An EB as demanded by the DCF would be a rival to the power of the EC.

A genuine EB would be a specialist body with one task - producing a newspaper with sufficient range and depth of coverage to match the needs of our movement. It would, like any other specialist body - the women's commission, the youth commission, trade union fractions, etc., - work within the limits of existing League policy where such a policy was defined. And where no established EC, NC or Conference policy existed, an EB would enable a serious collective discussion to take place rather than leaving an individual comrade to invent (or avoid) policies in articles published under their own names. Such an EB does not rival but complements existing League leadership bodies. The alternative - which we have at present - is a species of individualism (or, if you prefer, one-man Federalism).

(49) The DCF oppose disciplinary action to enforce payment of dues and paper money.

The DCF opposes only the use of unconstitutional disciplinary action (summary fines) at the sole discretion of a single comrade (Kinnell as Treasurer) against individuals of his own choosing. We also oppose the NC majority's decision to flout the Constitution and uphold such action by Kinnell.

Of course collecting dues and paper money is a real problem. It must be confronted politically. In fact Smith and Cunliffe on the pre-purge EC had agreed to help enforce a package of proposals designed to pressurise certain branches (including 2 Oxford Branches) into paying up their arrears (Jones was off sick at this time). Kinnell however chose to override these arrangements with the imposition of summary fines and other sanctions. Then in the course of the expulsions the Majority made it very plain that they prefer to forego any income whatever from Faction members sooner than allow them to remain in the organisation. The expulsions themselves have cost the movement in excess of £70 per week in paper money alone, plus much more in dues. It is the Majority which caused these needless losses.

(50) The DCF want to impose a Constitutional right of access to the paper for minority views.

Not true. The DCF argued for more political debate to be conducted within the league and kept out of the public arena of the paper. We have argued for proper EB discussion which would give a hearing to different points of view before publication and thus hopefully reduce the amount of written debate between League members in the paper.

But we have also pointed out that the paper is of a "broad" rather than a "party press" character, often carrying views which are not those of the League. Insofar as those views are published, or the paper carries analysis on issues where there is no established majority/minority League positions, it is reasonable that our own comrades who hold views in opposition to those of the leadership should seek to have their views published for discussion without derogatory and tendentious introductions being gratuitously added.

Quite plainly the right to determine what should or should not be published rests in the last analysis with the leading bodies of the League and not with any individual. What we are arguing for is a more balanced norm of League behaviour, not a new clause in the Constitution.

(51) The DCF opposes publication of the "majority" line or "even honest news reports" on Afghanistan. (Carolan, IB96)

The DCF has pointed to the issue of Afghanistan as one where long-held political differences, scheduled for debate since the fusion in 1981, ought properly to be discussed first within the League before being aired publicly in our press. This we understand to be the Bolshevik method, as against the Menshevik technique of invoking (bourgeois) "public opinion" against opponents within the Marxist movement.

Since Carolan is plainly incapable of writing a news report which does not contribute to his factional point of view on this (or any other) question - and there is in any event an almost complete world-wide vacuum of "honest news reports" on Afghanistan - it is correct in our view to insist that if Carolan has something new to say on the subject, he says it first in Internal Bulletin form to our members.

This of course he has (as with Ireland and Poland, etc., - see above, points 40, 41) stubbornly failed to do. The result is that comrades are being asked to vote at the June 30 Conference on Carolan's material on Afghanistan which is four years old! Meanwhile, until that vote, there is no League position on Afghanistan, either "majority" or minority.

(52) The DCF opposes giving space in our press to prominent labour movement figures.

We are opposed to non-members enjoying far greater rights (often including virtual immunity from criticism) than League members. Having said that, the fact remains that some dignitaries write better articles than others. Some contributions are to be welcomed and accommodated; others should be put straight into the bin. It is a tactical question.

(53) The DCF regard all Majority supporters as "handraisers" and "accolytes" - Kinnell.

This is a rather transparently cynical argument used by Carolan and Kinnell to alienate the membership from the DCF.

The assessment that some NC members have played a pretty scurrilous role of voting for the Majority for personal rather than political motives, or to avoid a conflict with the aggressive core leadership of Kinnell, Carolan and Hill is based in part on the tenor and level of their arguments (or the resounding silences). In part it is based also on their unaccustomed prompt - if occasionally inebricated - attendances at NC meetings with expulsions on the agenda. In other cases a tell-tale sign is their evident unfamiliarity with (and lack of concern for) either the facts of the expulsions or the Constitution of our movement.

Such an assessment could also be made of a few comrades who are not members of the NC, but who are personally linked with the inner circle of the leadership.

But it does not apply to comrades who voted politically in favour of the Majority documents at the 1983 Conference, nor could it: nearly all of the present members of the DCF voted then with the Majority, and still defend the same politics while opposing Carolan's methods.

(54) The DCF is an unprincipled combination.

The DCF represents the real spirit of the fusion. It contains a wide cross section of the views brought together in the 1981 fusion - which was motivated by Kinnell and Carolan. If the DCF is an unprincipled combination, then the fusion which the Majority's leaders brought about was an equally unprincipled fusion.

In fact, the DCF represents a principled line of agreement on the most fundamental of questions: what type of party is needed for the working class. We are unanimous in our conviction that it must be one in which political differences are genuinely accepted and argued out in a fraternal atmosphere without splits or ultimatums. And we are equally clear that Carolan and Kinnell doggedly oppose such a method.

The most unprincipled combination is that of the Majority, which has lined up with forces including brazen anti-Leninists, fainthearts and congenitally sectarian elements of the ex-ICL to smash up the fusion.

(55) The DCF cdes attempted to stage a "plebiscite" on the Special Conference issue.

The DCF collected signatures not as a plebiscite but in a bid to secure our rights under the Constitution. We are entitled to a Special Conference to discuss the expulsions. The NC denied us our rights. It is they who have repeatedly flouted the Constitution.

(56) The DCF Platform accuses the Majority of "sectarianism" in relation to the MO; yet one of the DCF's signatories is Cunliffe, who holds a sectarian position on the MO.

The DCF's Platform points to the loss of momentum and direction in our MO work (symptomised since the Platform was written by the organisation's failure to circulate model resolutions for this year's MO Conference) as a reflection of the movement turning away from the kind of interventionist, class-struggle politics that we saw as a strength of the fusion. The document does not state that the MO work itself is sectarian.

As far as Cunliffe's position on the MO is concerned, he was the main author of the document on the MO which received more votes than any other at last year's conference. His views on the League's MO work as such were more critical, and contained in the defeated document, IB48.

Whether this means that Cunliffe is sectarian on the MO or not is a matter of opinion.

But whether or not Cunliffe was right on the MO in 1983 does not answer the DCF's criticism of the League's current aimless attitude to MO work now in the run-up to the 1984 Conference. By witch-hunting an individual member of the DCF, Carolan and Kinnell seek to avoid that question.

(57) The DCF leans towards B*

The party norms we are fighting for are plainly Leninist norms quite distinct from those of B*. Of course some DCF members are involved in local B* groups. But so too are many staunch supporters of the Majority.

The problem has been that the League does not have any coherent view on what should be done around B* or in the MO. In fighting for such clarity, the DCF is actually drawing a harder line between ourselves and B* than are the Majority.

(58) The DCF leans somehow towards Socialist Action.

Nonsense. This is just witch-hunting. Presumably only the sheer stupidity of the suggestion prevents Carolan from going the whole hog and trying to link us up with the "Great Satan" - Gerry Healy - as well.

(59) Levy has been canvassing for "comrades to join the Smith/Jones organisation after the NC on April 14" (Carolan, IB110)

This is a classic of witch-hunting mythology and Carolanspeak. In fact even Carolan himself has been forced to admit that this was untrue, and the NC has passed two separate resolutions to that effect, declaring that the "evidence" for Carolan's allegation was false.

(60) The DCF are "the second wave for Smith", "agents" of the Oxford Faction", etc.

The DCF is largely composed of ex-ICL comrades opposed to the expulsions and to the bureaucratic leadership and methods that brought them about. Oliver, Armstrong, Gunther, Gains and **Melior** are long-standing ICL cdes with NO ties of loyalty or personal association with Smith or Jones before or after the fusion. None of them come from or relate to Oxford. They have responded politically to a situation created by the Majority. To brand these comrades as "agents for Smith" is to suggest that the despised "Oxford Faction" sank far deeper political roots into the old ICL than Carolan - with his solitary ex-WSL supporter - managed to do in the old WSL. Is this really what Carolan believes? If so, then why has he not drawn up a far more developed self-criticism and balance-sheet for the fusion?

The fact is that the allegation that the minority are "agents" is a crass Healy-style witch-hunt by the Majority leaders. Like so much of their argument, it is baseless mythology. Let's just hope that by June 30 we don't have a fresh 60 lies and myths to refute and debunk.

CUNLIFFE, JUNE 11, 1984

PS. I have not troubled here to reply to the many slanderous personal allegations against me as an individual. A full and honest account of my actions can be found in IB78. Subsequent events and allegations merely confirm the points made there.

Democracy and Centralism: twin principles of Bolshevism. - Cunliffe.

1) At the London Aggregate meeting on May 20, Kinnell made the revealing comment that in proposing regular national aggregate meetings, the Democratic Centralist Faction (DCF) was in effect proposing "either a conference every three or four months, or simply a talking shop, which would hardly be worth the overheads".

The DCF is of course not proposing a conference every three months. But neither do we regard national aggregate meetings - or for that matter local aggregate meetings or branch meetings where League members discuss politics without necessarily taking a vote at the end - as a pointless "talking shop".

Kinnell's statement encapsulates an attitude on the part of the present EC, who see political discussion and political work in general as simply a matter of the core leadership telling the membership what they have decided. They see no need or possibility that they as leading comrades should themselves learn and develop in the course of discussions with the membership at branch level.

This attitude is part and parcel of the EC cdes' failure to grasp or implement any serious structure of democratic centralism within the movement. This failure was concealed to some extent during the period of the fusion by the presence within the League of a sizable political minority which pressed for political debate and discussion. Since the expulsions this pressure has been relaxed - and the present derisory "pre-conference discussion" period, characterised by virtually no written or verbal political discussion, is plainly an indication of the shape of things to come.

This attitude of the EC to discussion strips the very term 'democratic centralism' of its dynamic content and tradition. Instead members are served up a sterilised version of democratic centralism which is in most respects identical - or in some cases even inferior - to the type of regime on offer in any of the more politically degenerate groupings of the world Trotskyist movement.

2) The organisation question of the party is of course central, but the party cannot function simply as an organisational machine. Our comrades have joined the League and pledged their energies, their financial contributions and even their lives in order to build a revolutionary organisation which will offer a genuinely independent programme for the working class in its struggle for power. The backbone of such an organisation must of course be Marxist ideology, developed in the light of the experiences of revolutionary struggles - the few victories and the many defeats - since the middle of the last century. For this reason we define ourselves not simply as Marxists, but also as Trotskyists who have rejected and continue to struggle against the bureaucratic deformations of Marxism and "Leninism" in the aftermath of the Russian Revolution of 1917. We recognise that our organisation must play not only an active, interventionist leadership role in the day-to-day class struggle, but must also act as the ideological workshop and leadership for the working class, developing and defending the theoretical basis of a truly independent programme and resisting pressures from the reformist, Stalinist and petty bourgeois movements that could compromise that independence.

Lenin pointed out that, unlike the rising bourgeoisie or other earlier propertied classes in the revolutionary struggles of previous historical epochs, as a propertyless class,

"there can be no talk of an independent ideology being developed by the masses of workers themselves in the process of their movement; the only choice is: either the bourgeois or the socialist ideology. There is no middle course (for humanity has not created a "third"

ideology, and, moreover, in a society torn by class antagonisms there can never be a non-class or above-class ideology). (...) There is a lot of talk about spontaneity, but the spontaneous development of the working class movement leads to its becoming subordinated to the bourgeois ideology (...) for the spontaneous working class movement is trade unionism (...) and trade unionism means the ideological enslavement of the workers by the bourgeoisie. Hence, our task, the task of Social-Democracy (the Revolutionary movement when Lenin was writing) is to combat spontaneity, to divert the working class movement from this spontaneous, trade-unionist striving to come under the wing of the bourgeoisie, and bring it under the wing of revolutionary Social Democracy."

(Lenin; What is To Be Done?, pp 48-49)

But this should not be read as in any way a purely propaganda exercise; the working class learns its most decisive lessons in the course of struggle. It is through its role as a conscious Marxist force within the struggles and mass organisations of the working class, and through the elaboration and fight for a programme of action embodying its principles, that a Leninist combat party must establish its leading role. To interpret the Leninist party's development and struggle for socialist ideology as an endless process of high-handed and impatient splits with those who disagree, leaving a small but chemically pure "core" of Marxists whose ideas will in some mystical fashion connect up in the indefinite future with the mass movement of the working class, is to misread the whole of Lenin's struggle for the Bolshevik Party, and embrace instead the most crazy sectarian idealism.

3) Democratic centralism is the vital backbone of a Leninist-type party, whose aim is not simply to discuss and propagandise but to build a leadership capable of intervening and raising the level of day-to-day class battles in the struggle for the revolutionary programme. Authority is vested in a democratically-elected central leadership to lead the organisation and shape its policies between conferences, and to execute where necessary sharp changes of tactics as dictated by the external class struggle. Opponents of particular policies or decisions retain the right to argue against them within the organisation, while being bound publicly to implement majority decisions and decisions of leading bodies in the meantime. Nobody who is serious about building a class-struggle organisation would reject the need for such an organisational method. To defend it against sloppy "liberal" methods is a matter of principle.

The Marxist party has the task of preparing the working class politically and organisationally to confront the highly centralised and powerful state apparatus; to focus the strength of action required to topple and smash that machinery, and construct the transitional dictatorship of the proletariat. Any suggestion that such a struggle could be conducted by a party loosely operating on the social democratic reformist pattern is refuted by every experience in history. And the post-war record of Stalinist and petty bourgeois political formations confirms that even in the most favourable objective conditions of class struggle they can lead only to repressive, deformed Stalinist-type states, or to outright betrayal of the struggles of the working classes. There is no substitute for the independent programme of Trotskyism and a party on the Leninist, democratic centralist pattern.

4) By insisting upon the disciplined implementation of majority decisions, and ensuring the public unity of the organisation even while internal debates continue, democratic centralism helps to steel the membership against the hostile pressures of bourgeois/reformist methods and policies. The imposition

of discipline and the enforcement of certain minimum requirements of membership draw a firm and necessary line between membership of a revolutionary Marxist, democratic centralist organisation and casual membership of a reformist party, social gathering or discussion group.

5) But, given these historical generalisations, there must also be consideration in organisations like the WSL of the ways in which centralism can and should be implemented in small revolutionary organisations lacking either great prestige or substantial following in the working class, particularly in periods when revolution is not an immediate possibility. There must also be a serious assessment in the light of post-war developments and demands from the women's movement, gay movement, and greater awareness of racial discrimination, of the ways in which over-rigid centralism can entrench white male hierarchies and block the necessary development of comrades from the most oppressed layers of society.

A Leninist party of the 1980s has a responsibility to take account of the strengths - potential and actual - and weaknesses of individual members, and establish a structure of functioning that can develop confidence and leadership skills, build upon strengths, and seek to combat weaknesses. Careful attention to these problems when an organisation is small in size can prove decisive to its ability to grow and develop into a healthy organisation of significant size.

Particularly important in such development is a combination of formal Marxist education for all members with a development of serious, open and regular discussion in which the laws of Marxism can be traced in their concrete application in the analysis of and intervention in current events and struggles. For this a healthy and democratic internal regime is indispensable.

6) Simply to regard democratic centralism as a repressive, authoritarian structure allotting full powers to the elected leadership is to distort its purpose and lose its strengths. Democracy within the democratic centralist structure is not a negative "overhead" cost, but a crucial element, for various reasons.

Most obviously, the democratic election and operation of the central leadership is a major guarantee of its authority to act and to conduct the policy-making and decision-making work necessary between conferences.

But the democracy must not and cannot come to an end with the election of a national/central committee, an executive and a full-time staff. Marxism does not recognise any papal-style infallibility or omniscience amongst those elected to leading posts within a revolutionary organisation. Internal democracy is one of the mechanisms through which a leadership must keep itself and be kept in line with Marxist positions and with developments in the objective situation; through discussion and debate on differences and analysis a movement must resist pressures towards empiricism, opportunism and sectarianism. Democratic centralism is the guarantee of a regime within which such discussion can be carried on freely.

7) Marxist theory is based firmly on the method of dialectical materialism - the study of the material world in its processes of change and development. Unlike the bourgeois philosophers castigated by the young Marx as he broke from contemplative thought towards revolutionary politics, we seek not only to analyse, interpret and comment on the world, but primarily to intervene in events and change it. Our theory - and concretely our programme - must be drawn from our analysis of the changes in objective reality in Britain and on a world scale; and it must follow through to conclusions in our practical work. In turn, an analysis of our practical

work helps us get closer to an understanding of the processes at work in the class struggle: why does this slogan catch on, this one fall flat; why did this campaign fail while that one brought us new contacts and support? The lessons we can learn in this way can enrich our theory, our programme, our use of slogans, and our initiatives and campaigns.

But for this process to take place, a democratic structure is needed to encourage and foster a continuing discussion on the political situation the problems we face, and gauge the effectiveness of our response in terms of our press, slogans and activities.

Such a discussion is in no way a matter of the EC cdes lecturing the members; it can only work if the members are encouraged to bring forward their experiences in the work, their reactions, their ideas. These concrete reactions can be invaluable in lending life to the often abstract analysis drawn up by full-time comrades largely isolated from day-to-day work in the labour movement. Such leaders must learn from the members - not because the members are always right (though in some cases they may be more right than the leadership) but because the members are that much closer to the real problems, possibilities and complexities of the work of the movement. The results of such discussions in a comradely atmosphere, with free criticism, would be stronger campaigns, better slogans, more appropriate articles, more lively leaflets, and more serious and developed internal discussions. The membership would feel closer to their leadership, and in turn would become more confident in making their own assessments of events, taking initiatives and developing as leaders in the class struggle. Quite the opposite of a time-wasting "talking shop" exercise. And quite the opposite of today's reality within the WSL.

It is for this reason that the DCF remains insistent upon the need to promote a far higher level of democratic debate and discussion at every level within the League. Branch meetings at which political reports are taken as major introductory items on the agenda, followed by a discussion in which all cdes are encouraged to speak, would make a big contribution to the political development of newer cdes, especially women cdes and youth.

And when we see the tiny size and isolation of many branches in the League, the development of such discussion logically calls for more area aggregates and national aggregate meetings, where members can come together to discuss political questions, test out their ideas and views, and feel a collective strength - without necessarily taking any votes at all. Such current/recent struggles as the miners' strike, the NGA dispute, or possibly an international turn such as the Polish martial law or the escalation of the war in Central America could profitably have been topics discussed at National Aggregates, while such meetings also offer a forum to check through and mobilise for our own campaigns, fundraising, etc.

g) The establishment of such a structure would also aid the development of the League in another way: the strengthening and political development of the vital "middle cadre" of the League into branch, area and national level leadership responsibilities. If the national leadership is to expand and renew itself, new forces should be brought forward in the work and learn in practice how to organise and politically lead areas of work. The present set-up of atomised branches - many of which seldom meet for political discussion - does nothing to develop such leadership. On the contrary, it creates conditions where only chosen proteges of the existing leadership stand any chance of emerging from rank and file level to positions of responsibility - and there is really no intermediate level between the Branch and national responsibilities. There is no established, healthy, internal structure of development whereby those respected in their own branches and areas can acquire extra experience and self-confidence. As a result, there is a weakening and a narrowing of the leadership circles rather than any development of new forces. Democratic centralism of course does not guarantee the emergence of a strong new leading cadre: but it does give the best conditions for the political development of comrades in the rank and file, and does pose a continuing challenge to the closed "magic circle" of clique politics.

9) The extremely fragmented historical development and political tradition of post-war Trotskyism is another factor underlining the need for democratic centralism in any party worth the name. Any healthy revolutionary party has to be able to embrace cdes from a wide range of different experience and tradition, and work constructively with them if it is to make itself habitable to workers and fresh forces. Only a genuinely democratic centralist constitution, in which the rights of minorities - including organised, vocal minorities are guaranteed and defended in practice, can accomplish such unity. Attempts to bludgeon or intimidate opposition elements into submission by organisational measures and individual pressure is simply a relic of the bad old sectarian past of Trotskyism, coupled with the unbridled arrogance of individuals who fail to grasp how one-sided and inadequate is their own grasp of Marxist theory and programme. We have seen where this leads in the WRP, the French OCI, the Sparts and countless smaller groups; are we to see the WSL go down the same hill?

No single tradition of Trotskyism is sufficient within itself to construct a real living party on the basis of expansion from a single homogenous faction. The free play of tendencies and factions, the encouragement of political debate and discussion are basic prerequisites for building a healthy base for a mass party. Tiny groups which now try to don the mask of homogeneity and claim an exclusive monopoly on Marxist orthodoxy do so only at the cost of stultifying their own internal development, alienating potential recruits, and condemning themselves to a future of sterile monolithism.

(10) The need to bring together the best of varied and partial traditions is even more a factor on the international level. There is no likelihood that the existing Trotskyist organisations from a myriad of traditions and their own particular experiences will meekly accept the self-proclaimed authority of any one small, nationally isolated and dogmatic current - particularly in the absence of common work and experience.

Yet there is little or no chance of a nationally-isolated group like the purged WSL being able to jump over the heads of existing Trotskyist groups to build directly revolutionary organisations in other countries from fresh forces.

No grouping worth the time of day is going to commit itself to joint work with us or with anyone else without guarantees of democracy and mutual respect. A proven record of our struggle at home for an internal regime of democratic centralism and the toleration of oppositional minorities is one of the key credentials that would be vital in establishing any joint work - remember how we assessed the American RWL.

On the other hand if we are seen to discard all democratic centralist norms, engage in a cynical and spurious fusion, tear up safeguards of minority rights and conduct bureaucratic expulsions, we simply drag our own banner in the mud and proclaim to the world movement as a whole that we have nothing to offer and should be left well alone. This would be more than enough to repel any healthy forces internationally who might otherwise take us seriously.

11) In short, the democracy of democratic centralism is no negative feature; nor is it a decoration or a once-a-year tokenistic exercise of "pre-conference discussion" followed by a few votes and the election of a leadership which for the remainder of the year exercises dictatorial control over the organisation. It is a crucial day-to-day component of a healthy organisation, to be jealously guarded against every attempt to whittle it down or tame it: it is not a custom that can be honoured in the breach. There is no way the WSL majority can uphold democratic centralist norms while bureaucratically expelling the whole of a minority Faction without charges. Mass expulsions of this kind are a definitive sign that the EC cdes refuse to work according to democratic centralism and will never willingly accept it.

Once eroded, the norms of democratic centralism and the methods linked to

it are extremely difficult if not impossible to restore.

Why is this? Because in defending repressive, bureaucratic actions to the movement's opponents on the left, to new members and to potential recruits, those who support or acquiesce in such actions begin to incorporate them into their own political tradition and heritage. They have to defend, accept or even retail "facts" and arguments which they cannot assess themselves, or which in some cases they know to be untrue.

The rationalisations defending a particular expulsion or unprincipled split become generalised into a rationalisation for excluding all oppositionists or for expulsions in general. The whole political complexion of the group is reshaped; memories of the past are recast to fit the new "reality". A mythology springs up around the events of the expulsions and those expelled - some deliberately created (the "worker leadership"; "disruption"; etc), others generated by rumour and ignorance. All this lends a new dimension to the political peculiarities of the group. We saw this process clearly in the WRP when many of us were expelled ten years ago. We can now see it again in the rump WSL.

If the present expulsions are not reversed in June, the residual WSL will become publicly defined - and thus be forced to define itself - as the group which bureaucratically expelled the Smith Faction. This inglorious distinction contains more than a coincidental echo of the 1974 WRP. New members who might join a group despite such an unsavoury aroma would do so only having - for whatever reason - accepted this breach of democratic centralism. It will become part of the political training of new members, something they will learn to uphold in ignorance or in defiance of the facts, and even seek to pass on to others.

Meanwhile at leadership level an unrepentant and even more arrogant core group will be still further convinced that by such unprincipled and sectarian manoeuvres they can hope to preserve the "purity" of their

faction and its tradition. They will talk in bravado terms of "splits and fusions" as a means of party-building, (while knowing full well that only splits are to come, since no further fusions are remotely likely in Britain,) and leading their dwindling band of followers round and round in circles.

Having abandoned any practical fight to achieve the "revolutionary unity" for which they argued so strongly (and cynically?) in the past, they will now dig in for a renewed period of propaganda work, one-by-one recruitment of some of the more inexperienced and vulnerable contacts, and, on an international scale, indefinite and ~~x~~ not so splendid isolation.

Such an outcome is not inevitable. Comrades at the June Conference have a last chance to prevent this sectarian degeneration and halt the slide towards bureaucratic centralism.

If you do not take this chance to overturn the expulsions, reinstate the 35 and insist on democratic centralist norms, you should at least recognise that by defending Carolan's Faction you are defending not Bolshevism but a regime and a method that have dogged and derailed the British Trotskyist movement since the war. The political positions may appear less gross, but to embrace Carolan's methods is to embrace the methods of Healy, Grant and Cliff. If you vote in favour of expulsion, you will not be raising your hand for a move forward, but helping to set our movement back once again on the downhill trail to a best-forgotten and inglorious past.

Cunliffe. May 24 1984.