
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE 14.7.82

Present: Carolan, Hill, Jones, Kinnell, Morrow, Parkinson, Levy, Smith
Late: Gardiner (domestic). Absent: Noonan (another meeting), Collins (domestic),
Gunliffe (domestic).

1. RAIL DISPUTE: discussion, agreement to bring the paper forward.

2. SUMMER SCHOOL: discussion on preparations.

3. TILC. Lebanon document - Gunliffe, Keith and Kinnell to be a drafting
commission for it. Delegation - Carolan, Gunliffe, Kinnell, Jones, Smith.

4. WOMEN'S COMMISSION

Hill gave a report based on discussion with Collina. Last women's commission had
decided:

- * Parkinson to be politically responsible for leading this work,
- * Steering committee of the commission to be made up of the NC members,
- * Women's commission to meet more often,
- * August meeting of women's commission to be women-only (for specific reasons
to do with that meeting, not as a general rule).

Levy said he was unhappy about designated male EC members (Carolan,
Gunliffe) not having attended last women's commission. Some discussion.
Jones moved that the report be accepted. Agreed.

5. AGENDA FOR EXTENDED OC.

Carolan proposed a discussion on IB7. After some discussion, agreed to
schedule:

- a) discussion on IB7,
- b) discussion on sub-imperialism,
- c) more general discussion on imperialism.

NATIONAL COMMITTEE 29.7.82

Present: Carolan, Collins, Gunliffe, Fraser, Gardiner, Grassac, Hill, Hunt,
Jagger, Johnson, Jones, Kinnell, Levy, Mac Douglas, McVicar, Maddox, Morrow,
Oliver, O'Toole, Parkinson, Parsons, St John, Smith, Stevenson, Wheeler,
Whettling, Wolf.

1. MINUTES/MATTERS ARISING

Hunt raised the issue of the letter by him to the paper about the IMG. Agreed
the matter should go to the EC.

2. TILC MEETING

Kinnell moved a resolution that the WSL should take the position that the
political and organisational conditions did not exist for a democratic
centralist TILC from the December meeting.

Discussion.

Smith moved that we should in TILC propose a non-binding vote on the preparation
of the December conference, and abstain in this vote. And the matter should
then be discussed in full at the next NC.

Smith's proposal agreed with one abstention.

3. NATIONAL COMMITTEE MAJORITY CAUCUS MEETING

Kinnell reported. In view of the developments at the TILC meeting and in the
first half of the summer school, the comrades present of the NC majority
had met before the full NC meeting. Some of them had prepared a statement on

those developments. They felt that respect for WSL solidarity had broken down at the TILC meeting and in the first half of the summer school, under the impact of the 'intervention' by the RWL and others.

Discussion.

Jones moved that the signatories (Carolan, Hill, Kinnell, Whettling, Wolf) be urged not to circulate the statement.

Motion carried by 17 votes to 5 (Carolan, Gardiner, Hill, Kinnell, Wolf) with 2 abstentions (Collins, Whettling).

Kinnell moved that the tendency comrades be urged to dissolve their tendency, to withdraw the call for a special conference, and to continue the debate on the Falklands in the perspective of the regular conference.

A motion was put not to take Kinnell's resolution. Motion carried with 7 votes against.

4. TILC DEBATE ON FALKLANDS/MALVINAS

Kinnell moved that: "This NC, in view of the general Leninist principles of honest political accounting, mandates the WSL delegation to TILC to insist on a vote at TILC - should the RWL resolution on the Falklands/Malvinas be passed - on an assessment of the previous TILC resolution. The TAF statement should be used as a basis for such an assessment for voting. The WSL delegation will naturally vote against it".

Motion carried unanimously.

----- ORGANISING COMMITTEE 6.8.82

Present: all comrades. (Jones late).

1. NHS dispute. Discussion. Agreed to raise call for a one-day general strike, subject to consultation with NHS comrades.

2. Summer school/TILC meeting/RWL.

Discussion. Agreed:

a) Smith to do a letter to RWL outlining our criticisms of their view of party-building/party press/strategy/trade union work - i.e. a tendency to a sectarian clique approach.

b) US commission to be re-established as channel for any comrade wishing to maintain relations with RWL, so that relations with the RWL are under the control of the leading committees of the WSL.

c) OC to present a report to NC on our appreciation of the RWL.

----- ORGANISING COMMITTEE. 13.8.82

Present: Cunliffe, Hill, Jones, Kinnell, Smith. Late: Levy. Absent: Carolan (holiday)

1. GERAGHTY CASE AND NHS DISPUTE

Assessment agreed as in paper. Also agreed:

a) A circular to be done on recruitment from NHS dispute,

b) Levy to write up experience of Oxford HWFC organising as model for other areas.

2. BL: Smith reported on recent developments.

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THE N.H.S. DISPUTE AND W.S.L. RECRUITMENT

At an Organising Committee meeting we decided to do a circular to the membership about the NHS dispute and recruitment.

Through HWFC, though our work at the NUPE conference, and through all sorts of local activity, the WSL has played a role in the NHS dispute out of all proportion to our size. This work has been valuable and positive in itself. But from our point of view it also needs to be complemented with activity specifically directed towards recruitment to the WSL.

Recruitment work should not be delayed. After the dispute it will be more difficult than now, maybe impossible: whatever the outcome of the dispute, there will be an inevitable slackening of interest and enthusiasm.

Local recruiting meetings can be useful, and the centre can provide speakers. But don't wait for such meetings. The first step, immediately, is simply to ask contacts to join.

Be bold. Once in a long while we may make a mistake by asking someone too soon and frightening them off, but far, far more often we are too diffident. Don't wait until you are sure that the contact understands fully what the WSL is about. Ask first, explain in detail later. If the contact really is not prepared to take on the commitment, s/he can always back out when you make the explanation. But if you assume without asking that s/he is not ready, you may be wrong.

Don't get trapped by a "stages theory". It is possible, sometimes even advantageous, to approach people to join the WSL before recruiting them to the broad groups or even before recruiting them to HWFC. Some, of course, will refuse the greater commitment but be willing to accept the lesser.

It should go without saying that a bold recruitment policy must be accompanied by serious organised education to make sure that new recruits know what the WSL is, know what they are committing themselves to, and get regular education in Marxism.

Kinnell for the OC.

WSL publications

Workers' Socialist Review no.1:
Capitalist Crisis and Socialist
Alternative, by Bob Sutcliffe ... 50p

TILC Bulletin no.1: Poland,
the FI(IC) split, Central America,
Italy, South Africa, France 20p

TILC International Discussion
Bulletin: The Transitional
Programme in Today's Class
Struggle 60p

The Fight for Workers' Power:
Manifesto of the I-CL 80p

The Battle for Trotskyism (record
of a struggle inside the WRP) ... £2.50

'Communists' against Revolution:
two essays on post-war Stalinism £1.75

Makers of Modern Marxism, by
Terry Eagleton 60p

Trotskyism Today no.4: Transi-
tional Programme, Mandel and
Stalinism, US SWP 45p

Trotskyism Today no.2: History
of the Fourth International;
British Trotskyists in World
War 2 50p

For Workers' Revolution in
Southern Africa 30p

Spartacist Truth Kit £1.00

International Communist no.9:
Lessons of May 68, Zetkin on
women's liberation, etc. 35p

International Communist no.8:
West Germany, 'Western Marxism',
revolutionary unity, the first
working women's movement,
review of Rosdolsky, etc. 35p

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Revolutionary unity, Trotskyism
in Vietnam, the Workers'
Government, etc 40p

International Communist no.4:
Building a mass working class based
women's movement; the Fourth
Comintern congress and the
workers' government, etc. 40p

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WF/WP fusion, Portugal, world
recession 30p

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International 30p

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EEC, J P Cannon, Bukharin's
economics (WF) 30p

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The Hotel Strikes 35p

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publications of Workers' Action*

Workers' Action magazine, March 1981:
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Militant and Afghanistan 50p

Why we need a General Strike 20p

Marxists and Nicaragua 15p

Afghanistan: Imperialism – hands
off! USSR – troops out! 15p

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Labour's Misspent Youth: an account
of the history of the LPYS 15p

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3. WITCH-HUNT.

Hill reported. Discussion. Agreed high priority for September 11.

4. LEBANON

Hill reported on activities planned. Agreed Hill to approach Keith about possibility of pushing for a big demo. Keith to be invited to OC to discuss perspectives. Jim B to take over as convenor of Middle East commission under supervision of Keith.

5. SPECIAL CONFERENCE

Hill reported on arrangements. Discussion on resolutions.

6. NOVEMBER CONFERENCE

Kinnell reported some ideas for documents. Agreed to discuss in detail next time.

7. SUMMER SCHOOL/TILC

Non-attending areas: OSC to chase up

Letter to TILC groups: Cunliffe draft approved

Letter to RWL: Smith's draft not available yet. Agreed Cunliffe to do separate letter on press in meantime.

Additional comrades to work on TILC: OSC report approved.

December TILC conference: preparations discussed. Kinnell to do notes on the existing TILC documents.

TILC and democratic centralism NC discussion: to be October NC rather than September.

Statement to WSL membership on the Falklands/Malvinas debate: draft from Kinnell agreed with amendments.

8. OPEN LETTER TO S.W.P.

Draft from Kinnell agreed in general outline.

9. NEXT E.C.

Kinnell proposed that the scheduled discussion on sub-imperialism take place at the next EC. 45 minutes to be allocated. Proposal agreed.

10. CORRESPONDENCE: JAMES

Letter from James replying to changes made by Parsons. Agreed to ask James to visit London and discuss with Hill and Levy.

11. FULL-TIMERS

Agreed that Will A., Joplin, Jenny F be taken on for a trial period of 3 months, on paper, youth work, finance, respectively, on the basis of topping up dole money. OSC to do more general survey.

12. MAGAZINE

Kinnell reported.

13. AREAS.

Levy reported on comrades possibly moving to Sheffield: to chase up.

Oxford: Todd, Mary W, Ann M, wanting to re-join. Hill: in line with normal procedure they should rejoin as candidate members. Other comrades dissented.

Agreed by 4 votes to 2 (Hill, Kinnell). Kinnell: this should not pre-judge general procedure in such cases.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE. 19.8.82

Present: Carolan, Hill, Kinnell, Collins, Levy, Parkinson, Jones, Smith.
Absent: Cunliffe, Morrow, Gardiner (all on holiday), Noonan.

1. CURRENT SITUATION

Brief discussions on NHS, Lebanon, Iran, Witch-hunt.

2. WOMEN'S COMMISSION

Collins reported: a women's commission meeting at the summer school, called specially for the purpose but poorly attended, and at which neither Collins nor Parkinson had been able to be present, had reversed our line on the women's march for jobs. What exactly it had decided was unclear.

Kinnell proposed, and it was agreed, that Collins and Parkinson should draft a resolution on the campaign, accommodating the reasonable objections, for a re-discussion at the next women's commission.

Brief discussion on F. Agreed to discuss again later on basis of women's commission discussion.

Hill proposed, and it was agreed, to push for a new F publication on the NHS dispute.

3. SPECIAL CONFERENCE

Minority resolution presented. Majority resolution still under discussion. Agreed resolutions to go out Monday. Deadline for amendments September 3.

4. RE-ADMISSIONS TO MEMBERSHIP

Collins re-raised the question of Todd, Mary W, Ann M be readmitted immediately with the immediate status of full members.

Discussion.

Parkinson moved that the issue be discussed at next NC.

Carolan moved that in the meantime the three comrades should be candidate members.

Carolan's amendment rejected with 3 for (Carolan, Collins, Kinnell)*

* Hill and Parkinson explained that they voted against because it was being alleged that the matter was raised not on the basis of general norms but on the basis of 3 votes one way or the other at the special conference.

Hill Parkinson motion carried unanimously.

Hill moved that the EC recommend to the next NC that the 3 be recruited as candidate members.

Motion carried with 3 votes against (Jones, Levy, Smith).

EXTENDED O.C. 22.7.82

Present: Carolan, Cunliffe, Hill, Kinnell, Parkinson, Smith; (later)
Collins, Levy, Morrow. Absent: Jones.

1. TILG. Agenda of July/August meeting discussed. Relations with
Morenists: resolution from Kinnell -

"a) That we reply to the Morenists that we cannot give a general commitment in advance to consider them as a principled Trotskyist tendency. We can concede that they are part of the spectrum of tendencies basing themselves on the Trotskyist tradition, but we have differences with them and require discussions to determine whether they are principled or not.

b) For our own purposes we should recognise that by all the evidence available to us the differences are principled.

c) We should write asking them to publish in their paper an article from us on their apparent popular-frontism in Argentina. We should publish such an article ourselves anyway.

d) Any proposal from them for publishing their material in our press should not be accepted without prior discussion by the EC".

Cunliffe: amendment to add in line 3, after "... that they are", "like us".
Accepted.

Carolan: amendment to replacing "basing themselves" in lines 3-4 with
"attempting to base themselves".

Tied vote, 3 - 3; amendment therefore defeated.

Resolution as amended: passed with 2 abstentions (Carolan, Smith).

NOTE: The Morenists had written to us saying that they considered it necessary for the further progress of discussions between our tendency and theirs that we should state that we considered them to be a principled Trotskyist tendency.

2. SUMMER SCHOOL. Discussion of arrangements. Agreed to impose a levy of two weeks' dues on members not attending.

3. SPECIAL CONFERENCE. Agreed date should be September 5.

4. WSL RALLY. Cunliffe suggested we should plan another rally. Agreed to ask Cunliffe to present written proposals to the committee.

5. DISCUSSION ON IMPERIALISM AND I.B. 7

Carolan: Comrades have said that the accusations of Maoist ideas are point-scoring. But I think IB 7 is far from Trotskyism. It seems to argue that anti-imperialist struggle is more important than working-class struggle in Argentina; to propose the idea of permanent revolution in Argentina, a country where there are no pre-bourgeois residues; to fall into a stages conception of revolution in which the national question is put forward in a form where it has no solution.

The ideas previously developed on the 'anti imperialist united front' seem to be behind it. But maybe I have got it wrong. I would like comrades to explain. Also I get the impression that some tendency comrades have not read IB 7 very carefully and would not actually agree with it.

Smith: There is no point in this discussion. I move next business.

Parkinson: We should have a discussion. IB 7 raises new questions in the debate.

Motion for next business lost by 3 votes (Cunliffe, Morrow, Smith) to 5.

Morrow: All the EC tendency comrades read IB 7.

Kinnell: On page 4, IB 7 talks about "the basic class camps in the war",

"the class camp into which Argentina fits in a war against imperialism", etc. This idea of Argentina being in our class camp is put forward as the basic reason for supporting Argentina. But Argentina is a capitalist state! The whole argument is based explicitly but falsely on an analogy with the "class camps" in a war between the USSR - a workers' state, although degenerated - and imperialism.

On page 7, IB 7 states: "Whatever the implications of that for the Argentinian or British proletariat, we have to base our position on the implications for the international struggle against imperialism first. This means that even if a successful defence against Thatcher did strengthen Galtieri, we would still have to call on the Argentinian workers to undertake that defence".

On the same page, the phrase "international struggle against imperialism" is defined by reference to examples including Zimbabwe, Iran, Nicaragua, etc. So the document is arguing that the workers' class struggle must be subordinated to bourgeois nationalist struggle. But surely from a Marxist point of view, even if Argentine national rights were involved in the war - and I don't think they were - still the class struggle would take precedence over national issues.

Again, page 14. "There is nothing especially genuine about a workers' struggle because it occurs in the framework of a trade union, rather than an anti-imperialist mass movement", etc. This seems to completely deny the struggle for the organisational independence of the working class. It seems to me just like the ideas of Bukharin and Stalin on the Kuomintang, except that they called it a "workers' and peasants' party" or "bloc of four classes" instead of "mass reformist anti-imperialist movement".

What is meant by "mass reformist anti-imperialist movement" in Argentina?

I think I can see a connection with ideas developed in some articles on South Africa. These articles present all issues as just the masses on one side, the state and the bourgeoisie on the other - thus fading various petty bourgeois forces out of the picture. In a draft of an article on Namibia SWAPO was referred to as if it were a workers' organisation with a bad leadership - not a petty bourgeois organisation. I thought maybe it was just an unhappy phrase. But maybe not. Do the comrades see SWAPO as an example of a "mass reformist anti-imperialist movement"? Or an example of how the strategy of "proletarian hegemony in an anti-imperialist united front" could be applied? I relate back to the Christmas 1981 TILC discussion on the "anti-imperialist united front".

Maybe I have misinterpreted what comrades mean; I would like comments.

Carolan: Do the comrades have nothing to say? Then we have no united leadership of the WSL.

Smith: This is all tactical point-scoring.

Parkinson: Smith is getting himself into the tactical corner. I had no tactical/factional motives in wanting this discussion - I wanted issues clarified. If we can't do that, we have no leadership in the organisation.

Morrow: Carolan at the May NC insisted that there were 3 positions not 2 - now he implies some tendency comrades may not have read IB 7. It's just debating points.

Cunliffe: Carolan has raised the temperature. The majority comrades are not creating a good climate for discussion. They confuse issues by agitating about a split danger.

On Kinnell's points - if I had written IB 7, I would have put things differently. But the general issues are clear.

Argentina was a non-imperialist country in conflict with the second largest imperialism on earth. Is imperialism strengthened or not by a victory in such a conflict? A defeat for imperialism could only take a military form. And the war was about the ability of imperialism to intimidate the masses on a world scale.

I would not use the term class camp, but military camp. We should have been in the military camp of Argentina - while trying to promote the anti-imperialist mass movement in Argentina. That's not a bloc of four classes position.

The Argentine bourgeoisie are not in a different class camp from the British bourgeoisie. But the Argentine people were up against imperialism.

The outcome of the war? Yes, the junta disintegrated. But it was in a bad state anyway. And what about the impact of the war on the Argentine working class? The signs are that radicalisation has been halted, there is demoralisation.

On the anti-imperialist united front: James D's first draft last Christmas

is not the position of the minority. At the TILC meeting we had some difficulty understanding what Kinnell and Carolan and Franco were going on about in their criticisms, but after that the amendments were agreed. You can't draw sweeping conclusions from first drafts.

We don't propose an anti-imperialist united front in Argentina. We propose working class mobilisations.

Kinnell: What is the "mass reformist anti-imperialist movement"?

Cunliffe: The masses on the streets in the demonstrations during the war.

Carolan: Cunliffe has interpreted the document in quite a different way from how it is written. But you can't treat documents as if everything is a "bad formulation". The anti-imperialist united front is clearly there in the document.

The masses on the streets? They were led by bourgeois Peronists, tailing the military.

Morrow referred to my insistence that there were two positions in the minority. There were - one accepting the Argentine claim to the islands, the other rejecting it. But some comrades have now changed from one position to the other with no accounting.

Morrow. I move next business.

Collins. We need an open discussion. The comrades' reaction is bizarre. The general point being made is that in IB 7 class interests are subordinated to imperialism/anti-imperialism. Either this is the same mistake in phrasing made several times, or it's a consistent political error, which implicitly would lead to proposing a bloc with the Argentine bourgeoisie.

Why do comrades believe that proposing discussion is a manoeuvre? It makes sense only if they think they will discredit themselves in any discussion.

Kinnell: I want to pose some more questions. Is the comrades' view that in any war between an imperialist and a non-imperialist state, we must side with the non-imperialist state irrespective of the issues?

Smith: That's a ridiculous question. We've explained our view in every meeting, and it's in IB 7.

Kinnell: Where?

A discussion followed on SWAPO as an example of a "mass reformist anti-imperialist movement". Kinnell argued that SWAPO is, all qualifications granted, essentially the Namibian Kuomintang. Our attitude to it should be essentially the same as the attitude towards the KMT advocated by Trotsky. That might include work inside SWAPO if there was a very small Trotskyist group. But the perspective must be to build an independent workers' party. Tendency comrades replied that the orientation should be to drive a wedge into SWAPO to separate the workers who believe that it is socialist from the leadership. Workers think it is a genuine workers' organisation; we know that they are wrong, but we must drive a wedge. This is essentially similar to Trotsky's attitude to the KMT.

Smith: IB 7 says: "It is perfectly possible and often necessary for Trotskyists to stand on the side of the most reactionary regime in a struggle against imperialism". "Possible" means not always.

Kinnell: "Reactionary" is not the same as "non-imperialist". Anyway, page 4 argues the issue in terms that would oblige us to take sides with a non-imperialist state no matter what. The phrase about "the class camp into which Argentina fits in a war against imperialism" is not incidental, but central to the whole argument, apparently designed to provide a case for supporting Argentina despite or regardless of the issues in the war.

The USSR analogy is heavily stressed, but does not apply. Argentina is the same class camp as Britain. It was a war between bourgeois powers. Support for Argentina had to be dependent on whether an issue like national liberation was involved.

Smith: This relates to the whole argument about the nature of the war.

Kinnell: Cunliffe's argument was that the most important thing for determining

our attitude to the war was its possible effects on the world position of British imperialism. But the reactionary nature of British imperialism's war to boost its position does not necessarily make the other side of the war progressive.

Smith: We have different views on that.

Carolan: Much of your views about Argentina are apparently derived from a negative reaction against Britain.

Kinnell: If the islands are part of the Argentine nation, then there is a logical case for support for Argentina. This view is taken by the IMG, for example. But it's not the argument in IB 7. The argument there is that "whatever the implications for the proletariat" we must "base our position on the implications for the international struggle against imperialism". Argentina's war was progressive because it was against Britain, not because of anything it was for. The seizure of the islands was progressive because they were seized from Britain. I.e. the whole argument is based on the idea that the Argentine bourgeoisie is ipso facto more progressive than the British bourgeoisie.

Smith: Obviously it is. It is not imperialist.

Kinnell: Not imperialist means weaker, not less reactionary! Here is the difference. Marxists used to say: 'The further east you go (i.e. the more backward the country), the more reactionary is the bourgeoisie'.

How can workers in Argentina contribute to the struggle against imperialism? Overthrow the junta. There is no other way. If Argentina were occupied by a foreign army, it would be different. If defeat meant that Argentina would be put under the control of imperialist armed forces, or of Argentine armed forces reorganised by imperialism to secure more effective domination, it would be different. But in fact defeat meant a shake-up for the apparatus of capitalist and imperialist control over the Argentine workers. Support for Argentina in the war would mean saying to Argentine workers that the Argentine bourgeoisie is not their main enemy...

Smith: We've been saying that for months.

Kinnell: That sums it up. The reason why the Argentine bourgeoisie is reactionary is not because imperialism tells it to be. It is relatively weak... and vicious. The Argentine workers face the Argentine bourgeoisie as the obstacle at all points of struggle. Sure, it is economically dependent: so are the small imperialist bourgeoisies, Belgium for example. Would we say the Belgian bourgeoisie was not the main enemy in Belgium? It is the ruling class that the workers have to settle accounts with. We could argue about how economically dependent Argentina is, but that makes no difference to the conclusion that the main enemy is at home.

Morrow: I have already moved next business. I see no point in this discussion.

Smith: I had assumed that everyone had followed the discussion. All the points raised here have been raised ad nauseam throughout the debate. The only new thing here is Carolan's "considered opinion" that we are Stalinists.

Carolan: It is not true that the positions in IB 7 have been spelled out before, though some points have been mentioned in debate.

Are comrades asaying that Argentina - an advanced bourgeois country - has a national liberation struggle that has precedence over the struggle of the working class? These are very strange ideas, and developed in a disturbing way. And it's disturbing that you resent questions.

Smith: It's not true that we resent questions.

Morrow's motion for next business was put and carried.

6. TEBBIT CAMPAIGN

Discussion introduced by Levy. Agreed to go for a united front committee, a campaign centred on breaking collaboration, and a lobby of the TUC.

8. POLICE ACCOUNTABILITY

Document from Kinnell (see IB 14) carried after discussion with 1 vote against (Morrow). (Vote only on general line).