

hour, endorsed what the NC had done. Had the votes of the expelled group been thrown into the conference there would still have been a clear majority for separating from the Thornett group.

It is a sad verdict on the fusion of 1981 and on the hopes we had of it. But the alternative — for the organisation to be paralysed until such time as the Thornett group chose to leave, and especially during the miners' strike — would have been a far more damning verdict on the fusion than recognition of failure, and separation, could ever be.

The NC expelled the whole faction, but only the faction. This meant that a number of people long associated with the Thornett group were not expelled — John Lister, for example. Neither was the 'Parsons' group. This group, based mainly on the right wing of the old WSL, was in terms of formal, general politics poles apart from the Thornett group, but allied with it on the basis of deference to the 'worker leadership'.

#### DEMOCRATIC CENTRALIST FACTION

These people organised a faction which also included some former I-CLers — the Democratic Centralist Faction. They continued in the organisation until a week after the June/July conference, when they resigned.

This faction conducted a campaign inside the organisation based on the idea that we had expelled Thornett for his politics — though the continued membership of many of the DCF members themselves proved that this could not be true — that it was undemocratic for the NC to expel them; that it was undemocratic to expel the faction as an entity rather than consider individual cases, etc.

They based themselves on the document drawn up on March 25, mainly by the Thornett group, as the basis for their 'unity and federalism' campaign.

This group was a splinter of the Thornett organisation, and it was obviously working in collusion with the Thornett group. The NC nevertheless chose to leave it in the organisation until after the conference because, unlike the Smith faction, it did not have the weight to paralyse us in the miners' strike, and, more importantly, because its existence in the organisation, putting the case for Thornett, helped ease the trauma of the split as well as serving as a foil to help the organisation clarify itself.

The best they could have hoped to do in the WSL was to get enough votes that they could say that there was a majority for the exclusion of the Thornett group at the WSL conference only because that group's 35 votes had first been excluded. They failed even in that, despite conducting a pretty filthy Healyite campaign of misrepresentation and slander against the National Committee in a situation where some comrades were unhappy about the split and it was easy to disguise the fact that the split drive had come from the Thornett group, even though the National Committee majority had finally decided to bring it to a conclusion.

#### LEGALITIES AND SUBSTANCE

Thornett, and his DCF supporters who recently left the WSL, have raised a hue and cry about 'democracy', about 'bureaucratic' expulsion, and about our alleged 'ripping up of the constitution'. Only a conference, they said, could expel Thornett, not the NC. If the NC expelled them, the outraged heavens would shower thunderbolts on us, and the rest of the Left would see us as criminals "worse than Healy".

Thornett, Jones and Lister have promised to "make the WSL's name stink" in the labour movement for its crimes against the 'worker leadership', and to do to us what they 'did to the WRP'. This expulsion, Jones told the recent WSL conference, was worse than any crime ever committed by the WRP!

In fact there was nothing undemocratic, bureaucratic, or unconstitutional about the expulsions.

But all the talk about 'democracy' and 'the constitution' and 'bureaucratic expulsions' is beside the point and irrelevant. The short answer to it is that, rather than let the Thornett group reduce the organisation to a beargarden indefinitely, and in particular during the miners' strike, we would have broken with them by whatever means we found necessary to free ourselves with the least cost.

When it became clear to the National Committee majority that the Thornett group rejected our terms for continued coexistence in one organisation as laid down in the March 10 NC resolution, we knew we had no alternative but to split with them, and that it should be done in the most economical and least messy way possible in the circumstances. There were two organisations within the WSL, and the progressive breakdown of the fusion since May 1982 (when the division in the organisation over the Falklands war began) had now led us to a situation where an attempt was being made by the utterly demoralised Thornett group to turn the League into a pre-conference battleground. They wanted two months' gang warfare leading up to a conference 'on the internal situation' that could hope to solve nothing — unless it produced a split. And they wanted this just as the miners' strike was taking off! Inevitably the organisation would be paralysed.

Whatever about the constitutional legalities, there was no way that they were going to get us to agree to this or let them impose it on us. And we knew it was not some freakish aberration on their part, but the latest episode in an unrelenting factional campaign. Their irresponsibility towards the WSL's work in the miners' strike was the logical extension of their prostrate pessimism over the TUC's sell-out of the NGA: in March Thornett probably still did not believe that a development like the miners' strike was possible.

Even before the miners' strike it had been our opinion that we had either to get agreement from them to coexist according to the normal rules of an organisation with a job to do — the rules laid down in the constitution we jointly adopted in 1981 — or else split with them. The proposal to devote two months of the organisation's time and energy to a re-run of the internal bickerings that had paralysed the leading committees for months, instead of turning to the miners' strike — that was a proposal that would have put the League firmly in the ranks of the self-deluded onanistic sectarians.

#### JUDGING IT POLITICALLY

Thornett said somewhere in an Internal Bulletin that his fate had been to suffer a bureaucratic expulsion while fighting the democratic fight for a special conference. It would be more true to say that the Thornett group had their licence to agitate within the WSL revoked while trying to put the organisation into the Guinness Book of Records with a fifth conference in 18 months. (We may have made it anyway: the regular conference in June/July made it five in 21 months).

There was no way that we were going to remain yoked to these hopelessly demoralised and disoriented people and let them drag us down with them into another full-scale round of utterly pointless squabbling. We had better and more useful things to do. So we broke the yoke. Our responsibilities in the miners' strike made it imperative, on the one hand, to sort the organisation out, and on the other energised us to face up to the long-evaded task.

It happened that we had the majority and therefore could do everything according to the constitution: we did not even violate standing orders. That was good and useful, and it means that anyone who says we behaved undemocratically or unconstitutionally must lie to substantiate it. But it is not essential: whatever about the constitution, we would have done what was necessary to free