

BRITISH

PERSPECTIVES

AND

TASKS

'QUELCH'

IB 74

30p

The WSL is facing its worst ever crisis arising from our success in the labour movement in the preceding period. The financial and organizational crises are merely symptoms of the underlying political crisis of the movement. It is no longer the case that we are on the fringes of the labour movement trying to involve ourselves, we are now at the very heart of that movement, everything we do and say has great significance and the onus is on us to provide the working class with real viable perspectives and leadership. This means that our political capabilities and the theoretical depth and foundations of the movement are being tested to their limits, hence the crisis.

We must formulate a strategy for breaking down the shackles of reformism which bend the British working class to the bourgeoisie, the first important steps to seizing power.

The origins of our crisis lie in the history of our movement, post war Trotskyism. This movement while maintaining the vital thread of the tradition of Marxism and the Russian Revolution has neglected that tradition through the harsh conditions surrounding it since the death of Len in 1924. Worse, since the Second World War and the death of Trotsky our movement has failed to significantly develop that tradition either into new fields or to seriously take account of the new conditions prevailing in the Second and Third Worlds or to such a stage that a revolution can be achieved in a single advanced capitalist country.

Marxism arrives at its present position in most of the world in a state of debilitating anemia, in need of urgent attention by the cadres of the revolutionary movements. Fortunately we have over a century's collection of literature on all aspects of life and struggle and over a century's worth of refinement of the guiding principles, strategy and tactics of class warfare. These two factors are our greatest strength. They also give rise to a great weakness. We have a tendency towards the mechanical use of old slogans, tactics and techniques of class struggle without taking account of two things. Firstly the experiences and methods of struggle of the capitalists, and the oppressed classes have changed since the '30's. Secondly, we are aiming to take power in an advanced capitalist country; This has never been done before so we are on our own, we write the texts. The keystone of Marxism is the philosophy of dialectical materialism. This was Marx's greatest contribution to our movement, his method of analysis which unified philosophy and politics and enabled him to produce his critique of the capitalist system and his alternative. We must educate our cadres in this philoso-

-phy is we are to successfully analyse our current position and produce a guide to action.

I propose a twofold answer to the problems of British Trotskyists, firstly a crash programme of education and re-organisation of those forces in the British post-war Trotskyist tradition and Secondly the outline of a strategy to attack this government in the latter part of this document.

E D U C A T I O N

I place education as first priority in this document because of the appallingly low theoretical standard in the Trotskyist movement. If we are seriously to try to work out a strategy for seizing power we must have an adequate theoretical grounding. A good education programme will also draw together the different traditions in our movement and attract in new cadre.

The old I-CL began the process of re-examination of the old texts, particularly the Transitional Programme and a reassessment of the strategy and tactics of the revolutionary party in Britain. This was an extremely healthy development but it did not go far enough. Our task is to fully liberate our movement from the crude political economism imposed on it by Stalin, to explore the realms of culture and social relations and produce a more rounded, accurate picture of the world. Under the hammer blows of the feminist and gay movements in particular we have begun to consider these questions empirically. A dialectical analysis will accelerate our progress.

I propose therefore that a thorough education programme along the following lines be instituted to provide the basis for the new party. I think the education programme should have four elements. Firstly we should hold either public classes for our contacts or better still some form of Marxist forum in each area covered by a branch or group of branches with contributions to debate from all forces on the left. This allows our politics to come over as naturally superior, not in a preaching or dogmatic way. A basic list could be Economics (Basic Marxist and Marxist V AES); Disarmament; Women's Movement; Russian Revolution; Stalinism; Philosophy; and organs of workers power, what they are and how to fight for them. Secondly an induction course based on the I-CL Basic Political Education Programme but with the addition of reading on Post-war Stalinism and an expanded feminist section. And a section on Basic Marxist Philosophy. In Coventry we have supplemented this with a series of basic classes for candidate members: The Transitional

Programme and the WSL, The Revolutionary Party, Trotskyism and Stalinism and Marxist Philosophy and its applications. Thirdly contacts should be encouraged in their own fields of interest to research and write for the movement. Even if this has no theoretical value to us (and it probably will be valuable) it will at least teach people how to write for the movement. Finally we must make the party's commissions function, to deal with the theoretical and practical problems which face us, to form an investigative branch of the movement. A minimum list is: International (various); Stalinism; Reformism; Philosophy; CND; and Anti Racism; Economics; Women and Gay. These commissions should produce the material necessary for our cadre to confidently face the forthcoming struggle.

A S T R A T E G Y T O B E A T T H E T O R I E S

I think we have to assess the last four years of struggle and learn the lessons of it before we proceed to take on this government. The statement by the NC on "The Next Four Months" beginning: "We've lost the election to the Tories but we can still beat them on the picket lines." is a very poor joke. The working class has given its utmost against the last government. Time and time again sections of the working class have thrown themselves into long, bitter disputes on jobs, wages and conditions only to find that the trade unions and particularly their national and local officials are totally inadequate. Any movement/strike demo or other protest, against either the government or capitalists is now EXPRESSLY POLITICAL and as such a reformist leadership will connive for its downfall, only revolutionary leadership is capable of pointing the way forward to victory. The politics, and types of organisation and struggle they give rise to, of the British working class are no longer capable of uniting the class as a force able to seriously challenge governments. Indeed the sections which have taken on the last government were previously poorly organised or relatively inactive with no record of political activity i.e. reformist political influence. Other previously active sections particularly in the engineering industry have gone down largely without a struggle because of their deep rooted reformist and Stalinist tradition. The problem was that once those sections had gone into struggle the trade union bureaucracy has successfully isolated and ground down their membership.

The other aspect of the past four years of class struggle has been the O. in which we have been relatively successful although we have not exploited that success sufficiently to pull in the people we influence.

The S- tactic has not been utilised properly resulting in only a few active groups. Principally as a result of our intervention the O left has pushed forward to a series of advances in democracy, however, policy making has been less consistent with a huge podge of left reformist and some transitional demands notably unilateralism being adopted. The Soft Left, Been and people around the LCC have reached the end of their programme of reform, they cannot see their way to a final assault on the right wing and the smashing of reformism. The situation is polarised between organised and unorganised revolutionaries and their adherents and the reformists of all varieties. The problem for us is how do we take advantage of the situation. This involves mapping out a strategy to fight both the right and the Tories and an analysis of the election defeat.

The election was a crushing defeat for the O and a serious setback to the working class. The Tories are the natural governing party for the ruling class. The O is only used in government by the ruling class when it is required to bring a major movement of the working class or threat of such a movement to heel by negotiation with its leaders. In addition the O in order to govern has to be seen by the class as taking up its interests in some positive way being an alternative. The manifesto presented on June 9th did not provide such an alternative, nor has the O been able to fight the Tories on a national level. Worse the proposal for wage controls contained in the manifesto was seen correctly as a further attack on working class living standards by the O leadership. The O was unable to lead a major working class movement against the Tories, the bosses correctly thought that one would not arise from reformist politics and organisation and the working class particularly the young and unemployed had no faith in the O. Hence the bosses were able to obtain a crushing Tory victory. With the benefit of hindsight I think we should have foreseen this and prepared our cadre and supporters for defeat and the struggle ahead.

The last aspect of the election worthy of note is the high note for the SDP/Lib Alliance. Most of this seemed to stem from discontent with the other two parties and a search for something new. This process could be extremely dangerous if the O and ourselves fail to present a workable strategy.

I think the time is right for us to put forward new forms of organisation capable of uniting the class around particular issues and taking on the government with a chance of winning. The issues I would chose are the Health Service and Nuclear Disarmament. The Health Service is an obvious choice. It must be the only part of the capitalist state's social services unreservedly supported by the majority of the working class as the health dispute demonstrated. The wave of support for the health workers, far larger than was actually worked for, throughout the eight months of their campaign proved that. Organised properly such support could bring down the government.

Nuclear Disarmament is essential to the survival of the world working class. All the major unions with the exception of the AUEW, EETPU and the ISTC are affiliated to CND. In addition the T&G has passed a motion giving the basis for blacking of nuclear bases. We have the job of taking up these paper promises and mobilising trade unionists to stop the Bomb. A unified movement along with CND and YCND members will prove a potent force. Our initial objective has to be an attempt to prevent the installation of Cruise in this country in December; Reagan has the option of war in Europe which his advisers believe can be won. The working class movement is the only force capable of reversing this policy of insanity. Cruise is an attack i.e. first strike weapon, it is no good for anything else.

28 I propose that committees for the Defence of Our Health Service be formed from O, TU and community groups delegates. That the emphasis in these committees be placed on delegates from wards, CMP's, JSSC's, Stewards committees, union branches and from the ground in community groups. If possible full time officials should be excluded and if not unless they are politically reliable we should fight to marginalise them.

This move is a break with reformist methods of organisation and as such is extremely important. We are attempting to break all the good fighting elements in the unions and the O from a reformist consciousness. Hence the repercussions inside the O especially and the trade unions are going to be immense. Going alongside this organisational break, our education programme as well publicised as possible is essential to provide the grounding for a POLITICAL break. Key to both aspects (education, organisation) is our position in the O which will take the leading role in setting up and in the activities of the new organisation.

T H E 'O'

The main thrust of our party since fusion has been in the O. As a result of our work in WAC, RFMC, LAW and other campaigns we are the leading revolutionary left current in terms of politics and influence. Our problem is how to capitalise on that success using the S- tactic. The left has been losing momentum at party conference and to some extent in the constituencies since the break up of RFMC and the high point of the Benn deputy campaign. The O is now being polarised between right, soft left (including Benn, LCC, CLPDright) and the hard essentially revolutionary or potentially revolutionary left on the issues of how far to push democracy and policy and response to the witchhunt. The left has failed to make the necessary impact on the trade unions (with some small exceptions in NUR and POEU) principally because of the resolution mongering approach to politics and the lack of a workable strategy for moving against the Tories. Some wards and constituencies have begun to move away from the former mistake, a move which will be aided by the setting up of workplace branches and one which we should look at carefully. In certain areas particularly London the left has been very successful in coordinating itself via "Briefing" a development we have failed to take advantage of and something we should think about and get involved in. Finally one area where the left has had great problems which remain unresolved, local councils of all descriptions. The left is finding it increasingly easy to get O nominations for councillor as even sections of the right refuse to face the pressure. The problem is that 55% of council money comes from central government, giving responsibility without power to councils.

The right wing is mounting a determined attack on the left on all fronts, O, industrial and in the unions. The witchhunt in the O has stalled by a determined campaign through LAW but after the election and through party conference it is going to be re-launched on a very much broader basis both in terms of support from the union bureaucracy and in scope (the SL and S- are very much in line for attack). The forthcoming conference is going to be a question not of 'is the left going to lose' and what support we're going to be able to rely on in the coming months. The likes of Chapple and Duffy are going to be

talking off another five years of Thatcher with more of the same from Kinnock's and Evans's but possibly more muted. All are going to be in agreement in putting the boot into the left and its policies.

For the left the debate centres on three major questions: why we lost the election, how to make the MP a mass party and how to fight the Tories. This document is designed to open the debate which will enable us to answer these questions. I think my strategy if properly applied to the O via S- answers the last two questions. I believe that local O's will be a key element in building the new organisations by convincing the unions of the necessity of them. It will be in the O that be a key S- can initiate the debate on the tactics and politics of the new organisations. At the same time we can turn the O outwards making it relevant to the class by taking up the day to day issues affecting it in a concrete fashion.

Around the election the O managed to become the focus for many sections of the working and middle class and hence recruited a large number of new comrades. This was the first time that the O locally on a national basis was able to link itself to the struggles of the class. Our task is to find ways of doing this all the time.

To return to the issue of councillors and local government, we have to take the problem seriously. It is the most concrete test of our political ability we have yet been posed and so far we have failed it. The problem is a thorny one, how do we build up a movement against Tory cuts nationally. The debate over the abolition of the Metropolitan councils provides us with the opportunity to form a national network to fight cuts in local government. More importantly it gives us the chance to present the issue on the estates to bring home the role of the Tories and the right wing.

I think we can tie this into the Health Service committees. Taking up the question of the services provided by the Council in an attempt to broaden the scope of the health service committees. At the same time we need to make maximum use of our councillor cdes. to provide us with information and propaganda for us. (I hope that debate on this will be as full as possible, its long overdue. I would appreciate detailed amendments - Quelch.)

To conclude this section I will put forward three points. Firstly the right wing will not defeat us immediately with a witchhunt at this conference, our past gains give us a base of support and a series of changes to constitution and policy that the right will be forced to remove if they want to win. However, the right wing is determined to smash us if they possibly can and batter down the hatches for another five years of Thatcherism. A defence campaign while effective and necessary is wholly inadequate to defeat the onslaught, unless we offer some positive perspectives we face eventual crushing defeat.

Secondly I think we need a debate on the S- tactic and the briefing tactic. The S- tactic has not been understood by most comrades, in particular its relationship to the party. Properly used it has a large part to play, if we can angle it outwards to new comrades of the O, the people brought in by the struggle against the Tories. This means a rethink on the paper to make it more accessible and less like SP. The time is not right to wind up or converge S- in view of the hoped influx of new people that we should be aiming to organise. The briefing tactic

can be expanded in its scope around the new organisations to take up the debate in the unions and in other groups. We must argue for existing "Briefings" to take up this turn and set up new ones to fill in the gaps in the national network. The "Briefings" should carry debate from all quarters on the left and linked to the new organisations will carry our ideas and slogans far deeper into the movement than our official press. The EB's for these organs should be as at present ad-hoc and unofficial so as to prevent a possible stifling of debate by the Stalinists in particular.

Thirdly it is essential for revolutionaries to remain level-headed and recognise the crucial nature of our campaign within reformism. The desire for reform of capitalism and organisations dedicated to that end has a longer history and consequently deeper roots in the British working class than any other. We must remain in the O and the trade unions and fight tooth and nail to prevent expulsion. Any revolutionary group in the country which has understood this is potentially part of a new grouping which we should be aiming to construct.

THE TRADE UNIONS

The most major problem for the left in the C has been the relative lack of success of the left in the trade unions. The Broad lefts in the unions have been revitalised to some extent by the influx of new blood generated by the O upsurge and the tenacious battles and vicious sellouts of the last four years. The apex (Roy Grantham rides again) of this movement have been the left victories in the POEU and NUR. The Broad Lefts are a heterogenous lot, varying from the new, largely revolutionary inspired, COHSE '82 through alliances and last ups like the POEU to the old stalinist dominated AUEW Broad Left. All face a single problem, a solidly rooted slow moving and essentially treacherous bureaucracy that has been in place for over a century and has become more encrusted, corrupt and tied to the bosses coat tails. The root of this of course is reformist politics. The Broad Lefts face a chicken and egg problem, to defeat the Tories it is necessary to defeat the bureaucrats, but to defeat the bureaucrats the Broad Lefts require to build up a rank and file movement that can immediately come to grips with the Tories. Such movements, and sections of the working class have mounted them at the rate of roughly one per year since 1979, have faced as their bitterest opponents the trade union bureaucracy which on paper are their leaders. Since the steel strike of 1980 which quickly progressed out of the hands of the ISTC bureaucracy and was only defeated by four months of determined isolation, the TUC and the national bureaucracies of all the large unions have made a conscious decision to block action on a large scale against the Tories. Post 1980 national strikes have been subject to tight national control and a series of selective actions cynically intended to take the maximum out of rank and file fighting spirit and pose minimum challenge to management. This culminated in the eight months health campaign, a series of manoeuvres which successfully ground down and demoralised the membership.

The TUC bureaucrats realise that they cannot challenge the right of this government to do as it pleases on the basis of their reformist politics. This realisation also applies to the private sector as the bureaucrats defend the right of management to attack wages and conditions as the ruling class is

popularity in the class. (To be dealt with in Disarmament Section). The committees and new style CND are revolutionary organisations providing us with an alternative mobilising focus for the working class without sidestepping the fight against the bureaucracy and their politics. The contradiction is that the new organisations will be based initially on reformist politics, involving the broadest possible alliance of working class forces. The new organisations can only be created by the work of revolutionaries, our job is to devise a campaign to create them involving the closest cooperation between union Broad Lefts and the O left. I think we have to bring these forces together on a national and local level to plan the creation of the committees immediately. Workplace branches will play an important part in achieving this cooperation. W

The leadership of the trade unions is intent on a parallel clampdown to the O witchhunt. Future movements against the government can expect to be kicked in the head even more smartly than the previous ones. This combined with the viciously reactionary mood of the bosses after their sheeping polls victory and the trend setting Cowley witchhunt could if we've not careful lead to a wholesale cleanout of militants in the unions and industry. The bureaucracy has crawled to Tebbit and seems willing to do his bidding whatever the cost to themselves. It is up to us to understand this phenomenon, the comrades of the reformism commission should investigate the labour movement bureaucracy, and to provide a clear alternative. M

The debate around the aftermath of the election defeat gives us the chance to pose the alternative to the grovelling of the bureaucrats. We must offer the more conscious elements our analysis of the last four years of struggle and point out the crying need for unified, coordinated and determined action against this government. Having said that we must use all avenues open to us (O, councillors, Broad Lefts, stewards etc.) to ensure maximum participation of the shopfloor in the new organisations and their preparations for the forthcoming struggles. M

Y O U T H A N D T H E U N E M P L O Y E D

The youth will be the vanguard of the revolution. This potential vanguard now faces mass unemployment, YOP's /YTs' and the threat of nuclear war. We must organise youth in order to rally and enthuse the mass of the working class and use the most potent weapon against the bureaucracy and the bosses. Unfortunately neither of the two pre-fusion organisations took youth work seriously nor has the post fusion one. All branches/areas should have a programme of youth work drawn up within the next two months.

In the four years of the last government youth went from a position where the majority could be assured of a real job on leaving school to a position where only a small minority even of youth in Higher and Further education were in that position. This has meant for many youth long periods of unemployment on breadline Supplementary benefit with little to entertain them. Another 600,000 are working on various forms of YOP's, frequently worse off than the unemployed and on WEEP likely to be working in small non-union shops with little or no health and safety protection. Those youth still in school are becoming even more

firmly backed by the government, the state apparatus and the capitalists viability argument. This resulted in the lack of leadership by the TUC and the O leadership of the ASLEF strike (which threatened to generalise the health dispute). More significantly the TUC has prepared its move against the NGA over the IT dispute in the interests of the employer. This is more serious in its implications than the laws of Tebbit & Co.

Before moving on to discuss the effect of the new organisation on the rtrade unions, the observations on the past struggles. Firstly, the split between the rank and file and the bureaucrats has not arisen from leftward political differences (indeed many bureaucrats are technically to the left of much of their membership) or even of initial militancy (Arthur Scargill), the model of repressed rank and file constantly fighting against their 'leaders' does not apply except in certain instances particularly BL. Instead objective conditions force sections of the working class into struggle with the ruling class. The politics of reformism particularly in the context of the crisis come into conflict with this struggle. Our interest as a revolutionary party is how to deepen and generalise the experience of those workers and break them from a reformist consciousness.

Secondly, the past battles with this government have all been in the public sector all but one in non-industrial sections, all in previously inactive sections and in none of them has the revolutionary left made major gains. The two most important factors in these struggles were the freshness and lack of cynicism in the often newly organised or previously inactive ranks of the fighting sections and the lack of the crippling viability argument before which even this hard-nosed government pales into the shade. In the light of this there is no real significance in the fact that the first of these strikes was the only industrial one. By contrast even the miners, the class's Praetorian Guard could not mount a national strike and in consequence face the decimation of their industry. In the private sector actions have been sporadic and largely in isolated plants, with a few notable exceptions the three day BL strike of 1981 due largely to a revolutionary lead being provided and immense anger at the arrogance of management (BL must be ranked as a private sector concern because of its past history and the ruthlessness of the Edwards management) and the abortive Vauxhall strike arising from the partial economic upturn. Revolutionaries have recruited from these struggles patchily and in ones and twos and in some cases such as the health dispute not at all. We have been unable to defeat the bureaucracy and the bureaucracy has successfully smashed their membership's fighting spirit leading to demoralisation.

The new organisations give the Broad Lefts and the left in the O the chance to unite in a single campaign. The tasks of the Health Service Committees should be to draw in behind them other struggles against the government in the mines, railways, Telecoms and on the shopfloor. To produce a united struggle against Thatcher. This will also have to be a united struggle against the bureaucracy's in all the unions and the O, undermining the strength of that bureaucracy by providing a focus for opposition and the basis for a rank and file fightback across the whole class. The "new style CND" committees will be more difficult to fight for as disarmament does not enjoy such a wide

alienated by the rigid education system as they can see the dole queues outside the gates grow. This position has led to a mood of frustration and cynicism about the establishment and the established political parties culminating in the riots of 1981 around the harassment of youth particularly black youth by the police. The position today in many estates is that a repeat of 1981 or possibly qualitatively more violent uprisings could easily be touched off.

The problem for us is how to organise first of all ourselves to take youth work seriously in all branches and areas of the movement and secondly youth in the various areas of society. Broadly there are six areas of youth work: YOP/YTS, unemployed, school students, workplace, YCND and LPYS as well as areas like anti-racism and women which cover all six. I propose we consider methods of organising the unemployed and YOP/YTS together as the only thing that separates the two is 40 hours of work a week. Personally I believe it should be easier to organise YOP/YTS "topshops" because the youth are working together with immediately obvious common problems and a tangible body (the management) that they can put pressure on. In contrast the unemployed are by nature atomised and facing the naked might of the state. Hence I propose to unionise at least the topshop's and community projects to provide a base for organising the unemployed. The other YOP/YTS schemes will pose great difficulty. We must examine the possible methods of leverage on the unions which organise shops with YOP/YTS schemes to get them to organise the youth and to come together in some form of YOP/YTS young worker and young unemployed forum. The chances of running a national campaign on this are good if it is backed up by plenty of local pressure. WEEP pm mpm-union premises will be extremely difficult even to get in contact with and the outlook for organisation in the short term is not good.

The unemployed face twin problems, firstly finding a job and secondly existence on the pittance doled out grudgingly by the state. Using YOP/YTS organisation as a base together with the hard core of activists in Claimant's Unions, UWA's etc., we can attempt to pull together the best elements of the unemployed. The second element of the problem is easiest to deal with, through involvement with people who know the full benefit rights and building strong links with CPSA and other DHSS unions. We must try to build unity across the counter so that the unemployed see the staff as people who can help them and the staff see their first duty to the claimant is to assist in claiming the maximum possible and both can fight the government's cuts. We should also see our role as assisting the claimant in schemes like cooperative buying of goods at wholesale rates to reduce the cost of living.

The first element is much more difficult. Unless we can force parts of the state or local government to make jobs which seems unlikely we are restricted to putting together unemployed support for the struggles of the employed and trying to relate the unemployed to the new organisations. This is important, we want to put the reserve army of labour into the battle on the side of labour. In building links with CPSA we should seek to broaden our scope in the health service unions, after the poor see the inside of hospitals most frequently of all and to other sections in struggle, local strikes, occupations etc. The unemployed must be a major part of any strategy, if we cannot get them jobs we can at least throw them into the fight to save other jobs, but above all we must have a discussion (which I hope this contribution will begin) on organising the unemployed.

YCND has the potential to attract large numbers of youth to us. It is now engaged in a fight for its survival; if it goes down we must view it as a missed opportunity and a serious dereliction by the movement. YCND has been a serious force among youth for at least two years, and until it came under attack it was routinely ignored by all but a few comrades. Two questions are posed: defence of YCND and a counter-offensive against the liberal/stalinist leadership of CND, and how do we build YCND. A serious campaign within the disarmament movement and the labour movement is required to save YCND. The issue should be taken up in all labour movement bodies affiliated to CND. YCND should also attempt to gain the support of CND branches/regions and set up regional YCND groups where not operating. Our aim should be to isolate the leadership of CND and hopefully seriously challenge it at CND conference. The second question I will answer in the disarmament section. YCND can be used to cover all the other types of youth work as youth of all occupations are attracted to it, these youth can then be encouraged to organise in the place where they work/study/sign-on and such work can be related back to YCND.

The coordinating body for all our youth work should be the LPYS. Once again in keeping with the traditions of our movement lip service has been paid to work within it. Ten years have passed since the I-OL comrades went into LPYS and we are no nearer taking the leadership, or even a seat on the NC than we were then. A whole generation of our activists has grown up with our miserable youth work policies, it is time for a change. I propose that each branch should target a local YS for takeover where possible. It means working out a programme of regular sales of our youth organ, following up of contacts, a programme of social and political events and use of the labour movement links of the YS to assist other areas of youth work. This gives the YS two roles, to propagandise and convince youth of our politics, to draw them into the various areas of our youth work and as the keystone of those areas of work, where they are debated and future moves decided. LPYS will be the most direct method of relating youth to the health service committees, it must be a priority to mount a serious challenge to M. The politics of M. are laughably irrelevant, their expertise lies in organisation and a variety of dangerously lumpen mass psychology. It is no accident that they see ignorance and backwardness as the two most important traits in the working class.

One final area of youth work which has not been considered seriously since the collapse of NUSS, school students. NUSS was instrumental in bringing a whole layer of youth including myself into revolutionary politics. Unfortunately its funding was chopped by the NUS stalinists and the less serious elements of the SWP completed the job. However, all our areas of youth work bear on it and I think it may be possible to set up some form of school students union on a local or preferably a national basis. There is much scope for it, the education system under capitalism is rigid, anti-personal, anti-initiative and above all boring and with the introduction of YTS streaming, preparation for super-exploitation. We should be on the lookout for the finance to set up such an organisation.

Wiganisation should be carried out through a campaign on one of these areas. All of them interlock and relate directly to the J, allowing diversification in the future.

Above all we must relate our youth work to the new organisations and vice versa. The local LPYS should play a key role along with YCND in organising the youth work of the committees.

S T U D E N T S

I have not included students work in youth work perspectives because it exists in a different environment and has its own problems and advantages. The student movement has been the backbone and underpinning of the British and international revolutionary movement for decades and despite sneers against the petit-bourgeois origins of the movement we should not forget it. Students are above all a key source of our cadre. In general there has been a drift to the right on the universities and polys owing to political and economic pressures on the petty bourgeois layers that make up the majority of students. However, the radical elements are still there and relatively easy to attract towards revolutionary politics. We are in a good position, with our leading role in SSIN (Socialist Students in NOLS) and the new "Socialist Student" coming out in the autumn. Branches of the movement should work out how they can use the new organ to intervene into the local Higher and Further Education establishments and try to set up meetings on our politics to follow up this work.

The FE sector is different from the Higher Education section, owing to a lower level of student union organisation, a large involvement of day release and part time students and a much larger proportion of working class youth enrollment. We should take the opportunity given us by "Socialist Student" to organise in these institutions. We can also take advantage of the fact that most YTS schemes will have the "training" element of the course on FE premises and this should be an important avenue for the organisation of these youth.

I have found that it is relatively easy to become prominent in student politics in SU's. Our perspective above all should be to turn students outwards to the wider labour movement, starting with the unions in the college, using the labour clubs and NOLS.

D I S A R M A M E N T

The world stands at the brink of destruction, the massed arsenals of the stalinists and the capitalists stand awaiting the order or more likely the mistake.

Against this fearful background the disarmament movement has grown rapidly throughout the world. In Britain our movement apart from a few comrades has routinely ignored by all but a few comrades. The disarmament movement has been the fastest growing radical movement in the country. Generalised fear and distrust of the political and military establishment has enabled CND to turn out vast numbers on demonstrations, obtain affiliations from large sections of the labour movement and set up groups of all different types. However, it has been unable to offer a workable strategy to stop the government which ignores demonstrations, recognising only a direct challenge to its power. The

result is a movement staring defeat and the imposition of cruise missiles in the face. This has led to the liberal and stalinist leadership of CND running for cover and lashing out at the radical and revolutionary sections of the movement, LCND and YCND.

CND has an immense base of support particularly amongst youth and labour movement activists. I propose an initiative in the O and TU's to act against the nuclear bases and to build up support local O's and the more radical CND's should run a campaign to the local union branches, headed by councillors, MP's etc., using particularly the T&G resolution and national publicity. The purpose should be twofold, to implement action by transport and supply workers and to set up a standing liason committee on ND as part of the local CND branch. Along side this an intensive campaign into local estates, leafletting, socials, street meetings to expose the defence sham and civil defence. The liason committee should take increasing responsibility for the work as it progresses. Nationally we should get a number of MP's and notables to condemn cruise and call for industrial action to stop it, initiating a national campaign based around the T&G resolution and the MP's press release which we should write. The immediate aim should be to shut down Greenham Common.

THE HEALTH COMMITTEES

The impetus for the health committees should come from local O's and from the O nationally. The national campaign should produce a detailed socialist plan for the health service i.e. the kind of service we want in conjunction with groups studying the question. The national O: MP's, and other notables should be pushed to expose the extent of the cuts, give the names of those who have died in consequence, run regular press conferences, manufacture bideos etc. Ensure that people reading and seeing national media knows how and why the people of Britain are dying and what the alternative is.

On a local basis the O's should approach local unions inside and outside the NHS. Detail the cuts locally and the subsequent deaths. A broad alliance of these unions against the cuts is possible and using local notables (MP's) and a local adoption of the national plan for health a liason committee aimed at education and action can be built. We should be aiming to start work on the alternative health plan and get the campaign into shape by the beginning of '84. On an immediate basis local O's should sound out local unions, research the cuts, offer support for any fightback. Nationally the O should denounce the cuts and expose the governments lies at every turn in a carefully coordinated publicity campaign which we should push for.

WOMEN

A key element of my strategy for attacking the Thatcher government is the maximum involvement and political development of women both inside and outside the organisation. The organised revolutionary left has NEVER had even an adequate analysis of oppression at an individual level, it has failed to extend the

U dialectical method to the personal level and see the individual as a part of the political system. This goes back to Marx and Hegel. Hence some revisionism/extensionism is required. This failing has exposed itself particularly in the case of groups where there is oppression on a personal level as a significant part of the economic/ideological/political oppression. Such people make up the whole of the world population with the exception of straight white men in the advanced capitalist countries. W The women's movement particularly has begun to examine this oppression and the politics of the personality. Except in certain isolated instances this development has taken place outside the organised revolutionary movement and in all cases the revolutionary left has received it with some degree of opposition.

U Our task is to take on board the lessons of the women's movement, to study it and above all to implement all its positive aspects, to use this work as a basis for an assessment of the politics of the personality. Our aim in the short term is make this movement habitable for women and give it an understanding of personal oppression and the methods of fighting against it both inside and outside the party. Theory and practice flow together hence while we are trying to learn from the women's movement and understand why the revolutionary left has failed to be attractive to women, we must put our work amongst women on a firmer footing. Both pre-fusion organisations recognised that fighting the oppression of women required a separate newspaper at least. However, the I-CL with their better appreciation of working class consciousness and heavier influence from the women's movement were by far the most successful. WF stands as a landmark in the gradual turn of the organised left towards women. However, many of the successes of WF have not been exploited to their full potential. Nationally this means working out what support WF has got, affiliated organisations etc., and how this support can be used to get maximum involvement of women in these organisations through speaking tours, day schools etc. Locally, each WSL branch has to work out a plan for its work amongst women, this is especially important in branches where there are no women. Every aspect of our work must be examined with a view to attracting and involving more women. In the case of the disarmament and health campaigns the potential for attracting women is immense given the leading role of women in these struggles previously and the created dependence of women on the NHS. Both campaigns have to be fought with a particular emphasis on informing women of the effects of this government on them and the fact that other women are leading the fightback. This should be backed up with women only meetings organised by the committees and positive discrimination operating throughout the campaigns and on our part a regularly produced WF covering all aspects of women's struggles and oppression.

To a large part this work has to be coordinated and fought for by the women's commission. This important body has been seriously weakened by a long running feud which should have been stopped by the conference decision on work amongst women. The EC has a duty to step in and ensure that the commission functions properly.

T H E W S L

The Russian revolution was a dress rehearsal for the world revolution. The Russian Bolsheviks are the inspiration for the

whole of the revolutionary left and quite rightly so. The problem for us is to develop and use this heritage to assess 45 years of assorted brands of the Fourth International in Britain. We have to recognise the deficiencies of our heritage, notably the politics of the personality and the lack of experience in taking power in an advanced capitalist country. Lenin and Trotsky stated correctly that any party which was capable of this would have to be better in all respects than the Russian Bolsheviks and the significance of the Russian Revolution would be eclipsed by this new upheaval.

For its part the British revolutionary left has always been afflicted with an ultra-leftist sectarian malaise leading to a turn away from the masses and the real problems facing revolutionaries and towards factionalism. This sickness, caused by political immaturity and the lack of a sufficient theoretical and practical base has meant that only once in the late '40's could British Trotskyism call itself a single grouping and only twice has it ever got close to tackling the problem of reformism. Our task is to study this sorry history and to learn from mistakes made when comrades have done work in the class. From this we have to extract the lessons to be learned from forty years of revolutionary work and political debate in Britain.

The WSL does not spring from a vacuum, it has its roots and draws most of its cadre from the past, it must recognise the fact. Indeed one of its founding strengths is that it is able to draw on so much of the past via the two traditions that make it up. However, comrades have to see that we should learn from the past not repeat it. Our party stands as a landmark development of British Trotskyism, two tendencies with different traditions, methods of work and analyses have undertaken a fusion seriously and to a large extent successfully. This has resulted in a group which is clearly recognised as the leading tendency among Trotskyists who recognise the importance of the Labour Party in Britain i.e. among serious Trotskyists. This means two things. Firstly as the class struggle in Britain gets more serious no-one else is likely to come up with any workable answers, especially left reformists. Secondly this movement needs to take itself far more seriously as a LEADERSHIP in all areas of struggle. Over the past few months we have discussed areas of work and political disagreement in the movement, some of them relevant, others like federalism fairly irrelevant. Unfortunately, policy has emerged piecemeal from our conferences with no sense of priority and importantly no coherent all round strategy for the next all important round in the fight against reformism. This has meant our branches implementing policy piecemeal, our leadership has no mandate on which to base itself and our whole party has no sense of direction. THIS IS THE ROAD TO FACTIONALISM AND DISASTER, this document is my contribution to averting that disaster.

The WSL has to reassess itself and its role in the labour movement. As the struggle gets fiercer, it is quite possible we may be in a position to further realign the forces of British Trotskyism, bring more of the forces of serious revolutionary class struggle around our banner. We will also increasingly come into conflict with all varieties of left reformism/centrism/sectarianism Trotskyism. We must will be out on our own, if we wish to advance we must call the shots, take the initiatives and act as a politically independent organisation. Already people we have in the past worked with in the O, particularly in CLPD have turned against us. Vital in establishing and maintaining a consistent political line is a solid organisational base,

the WSL needs to take a hard look at itself and its structures and thoroughly revise them. I don't propose to produce a full tract on the organisation bec of the party, however, I believe that the most important part of the practice of any group is its own organisation becuase of its immense effect on all aspects of comrades activity. By the same token organisation cannot exist in a vacuum, it requires a sense of purpose and a set of defined perspectives for its work. IB50 Carolan/Kinneil's answer to the problems of the movement is notable in its PURELY ORGANISATIONAL proposals with no reference to the requirements of the British class struggle. Most of the points made in part 'X' of the document are valid with the exception of point L: "Initiate a series of discussions beginning on the NC, on the party norms of our movement and key texts of Trotsky and Cannon." Which sounds to me like a cue for a round of sectarian bloodletting interspersed with periods of navel gazing.

The document is totally inadequate, three points have to be made. Firstly, as Marxists we must look at problems as a whole. The WSL is in crisis first and foremost becuase of the political deficiencies of its cadre particularly its leadership cadre. The organisational crisis arises from and is part of the political crisis and both must be dealt with together. Secondly even within the proposals outlined by the comrades there are grave omissions. Most notable are the absence of any mention of the party's commissions and fails to develop a critique of the WSL's central leadership. Previously I mentioned commissions as an investigative arm of the movement, I believe that as such they are essential. The EC should be instructed to ensure that all the commissions pro osed in this document have a convenor and meet regularly, also the movement should rule that every comrade is a member of at least one commision. This will assist in the political development of both the movement and individual comrades. Thirdly I think the underlying political method in IB50 is one of substituting organisational changes for a political analysis, previous experience has shown that this is a destructive blind alley.

As a final point in this section I mus want to briefly state how we should angle S- and our other publicity. We have to aim our work at the majority of the people who have no active involvement in politics. To so this we have to bring our propaganda pparticularly S- to the level of people. The paper must be informative and without the usual Trotskyitese which means that we actually are unable to communicate with most people using our paper. This means that assorted bad habits have to be stopped, three spring to mind. Firstly we should avoid sloganising like theplague it is. If we are going to call for anything to be done in our paper, we have to make absolutely sure that our comrades are in the forefront of the fight for that demand. Secondly the editors of the paper must end the practice of rewritting articles without the permission of the authors. Thirdly and in part flowing from the second point, more comrades have to be persuaded to write for the paper, particularly reports of events etc. The paper is becoming a series of opinions of a small group of people on assorted political happenings. Quite frankly I find the paper tedious, I now that probably a majority of the people who buy it do so out of respect for our work not out of any desire to actually read it S- is our most important project it has to improve drastically if it is to survive.

C O N C L U S I O N

In ending this document I would like to make two points. Firstly this document outlines the most drastic restructuring of the British labour movement since its origins in the Chartist movement, including to a great extent the revolutionary left, is bureaucratic, petty and largely irrelevant to all but a small few. An important example is the O, most people going to a ward meeting would leave after a few minutes. At the same time it is possible to become prominent in the O locally and nationally without ever getting close to the struggles of the working class. The challenge to us if we are to change the labour movement is how do we make it relevant enough that people will actually give up time and effort of it. I hope the proposed restructuring will be drastic enough to do this.

Secondly, the WSL stands at the crossroads. We have the opportunity to examine our past struggles and the struggles of others, particularly the struggles against the previous Tory government and draw the lessons from them. If we present our conclusions properly we can link up with layers of people casting around the same problem. Our objective is to take on the Tories and the bureaucracy at the same time and stand a chance of winning. Such an evaluation has to be started soon, I hope by the release of this document. The alternative is disintegration.

Note: The O section was written before conference. I have not had time to adequately analyse the proceedings of conference.

Quelch 27.10.83

CORRECTIONS:::

Page1, At end of 2nd paragraph Insert "This document seeks to open debate and serve as a framework for advance."

Page5, At end of 1st paragraph Insert "Disarmament will have to be fought for on a different basis for two reasons. Firstly the health service campaign should be the alternative focus for the labour movement. Secondly CND has already established its claim to fight for disarmament. Therefore we should be aiming at a new style CND drawing in YCND, CND, O and especially supply and transport unions to form a basis for action against nuclear weapons."

Page7, After 2nd sentence on page Insert "Above all the new form Briefing cannot be a left circular. It must be informative, without left jargon and see its role as getting information and the importance immediate political debate and issues out to the maximum audience."