

INTERNAL BULLETIN No 120.

June 1984.

Appeal on behalf of the 36 expelled members.

THE ORGANISATIONAL MOVES.

It was evident last summer - in the aftermath of the second stage of the conference - that a decision had been taken by the core members of the old ICL that the old WSL could not be politically absorbed into their tradition and that the fusion must be brought to an end. This would be done by using the majority they had established at the conference on several documents. They would progressively end the cooperation and accomodation which was necessary after the fusion and gradually impose their own tradition and their own political positions on the fused group, winning as many of the old WSL members as they could and driving the rest out in one way or an other.

The most obvious sign of this was the removal of Kinnell from the joint editorship of the paper and his replacement by Carolan. According to reports which have never been contradicted it was because Kinnell was letting Cunliffe get away with too much, a clamp down was necessary and Carolan was the right person to do it.

My complaint that the coverage of the September 17th conference was biased and factional was a direct product of that move. (Some comrades seem to think that I was wrong to take this issue to the NC since the issue was not big enough - but I had the usual choice in such circumstances; raise the issue and be accused of "disruption" or being told at a later date when the process was more advanced and the issue simply had to be raised "why didn't you raise it at the time".)

Late in December it became clear that the process had moved to a new stage. A decision had been taken to create the conditions for a split in the short term by the sudden application of stringent organisational norms designed to achieve a political objective. When I protested on the EC that this was deliberate harrassment Carolan replied by saying "yes you are being harrassed" but you will be harrassed "within the constitution".

In fact Carolan turned out to be wrong on that. The harrassment intensified but it was clearly outside the constitution as well as being politically unprincipled. Fines were imposed contrary to the constitution, lapsings were threatened outside the constitution not only for dues arrears but for paper money, one year old paper money, old NC pool fares and failure to pay money by standing order.

At the same time we were told on the EC that the open access to the paper which had been established at the time of fusion would now be ended. The majority would now control what went in the paper and they would decide the extent to which we would have access to it, it would be the majority political line which would now be carried on all issues whether the group has an established position on it or not. They would determine the line for example on assessment of the industrial situation at any one time. As a result of this an arranged article I wrote on the industrial situation in January was rejected by Carolan on clearly political grounds. (Carolan's denial of this is predictable but dishonest).

Faced with these organisational moves, and having been rejected on both the EC and NC majorities whenever I raised any of these issues, I decided to take the issues to the Control Commission (CC). It was very much the right and obvious place to go, faced with the existing conditions on the EC and NC (and having been refused a conference). Some new comrades seem unaware of the role of the CC. Not only is it an essential component of a democratic centralist regime but one of its key functions is to hear the complaints of any member

who may feel that he or she has been abused by a leading committee, discriminated against or had his or her democratic rights infringed.

The CC is an independant body, elected directly from the membership and therefore ultimately responsible to it.

At first Carolan accepted that the right of any member to go to the CC was a basic democratic right which could not be qualified in any way. By the time I was ready to lay my complaints in front of the CC however things had changed dramatically. Carolan and Kinnell now tried to prevent my free access to the CC. A resolution was adopted by the EC to the effect that I was out of order in laying my complaints in front of the CC and that I was required to go to the EC and the NC before I could go to the Control Commission. In other words I must first complain to those who I regarded as responsible for infringing my democratic rights before I could go to those who I was asking to defend me.

You will see from the letters relating to the CC report that the astonishing grounds given by Kinnell and the EC majority for this undemocratic pressure was rule 12:iii. It is amazing the way that Kinnell twists that rule. You will see from Kinnell's letter to me of Feb 14th that he claims that this rule requires "issues" to be taken first to the EC. This is not true. The rule defines which "issues" must be taken to the EC first and the "issues" it refers to are "political differences". As comrades will know political differences are a very different matter to allegations of infringements of democratic rights. Of course it is right for an EC member to take political differences to the EC and discuss them there first, the CC in anycase is not concerned with political differences as such, it's job is to "independently investigate disputes of fact relating to disciplinary cases, disputes between comrades or complaints against leading committees or functionaries which are referred to it by any of the parties in dispute, the EC or the NC".

The section of that mandate which is relevant in my case is "complaints against leading committees or functionaries". I was raising complaints against the EC and the NC and I had a clear unambiguous right to do so under the constitution of the WSL which was now being interfered with.

For these reasons I had to write to the EC and tell them that I could not accept the ruling that they had made and that I intended to make my complaints to the CC. (My letter to EC 18.12.84, IB X104 page 5). It should also be said that it was not a matter of me raising charges against anyone. I was making complaints. It would then be up to the CC to decide what would happen from then on. If there were any charges coming out of the matters raised then those charged would be entitled to their rights under the constitution. (Specified charges and two weeks notice).

The EC, however, were not content with just trying to interfere with my rights to go to the CC; they then proceeded to try to interfere with the CC itself! It is something which supporters of the majority in this matter should think about - interference with a CC. It is hard to think of a more serious breach of democratic norms than that. A CC is either independant and free from political pressure from the controlling leadership or it is nothing. Yet a resolution was adopted by the EC (although the EC majority were split on it) instructing the CC not to meet. That resolution, as far as I know, was never conveyed to the CC in that form, neither was it minuted

in the Ec minutes - presumably the EC majority rediscussed it and changed their decision.

The EC majority did, however, try to interfere with the workings of the CC, as can be seen from the CC report itself. Kinnell not only used the clause 12:iii argument but he tried to alter the constitution by a bizarre interpretation of the punctuation:

"Kinnell also gave us considerable advice both previous to the meeting and in his submission to the meeting about the function of the CC and it's competence to investigate and report on the charges.

"He laid particular stress on trying to interpret the punctuation of the constitution in such a way as to limit the power of the CC to investigate only the facts of a dispute. We do not accept his reading of the constitution and I am yet to meet an ordinary member of the organisation who does. It seems quite clear to us that we are charged to investigate whether or not we think members rights have been infringed by a leading committee. Questions of fact are central, but so also are the constitution and its interpretation, and the established norms and practices in this and other bolshevik organisations!"

The pressure put on the CC through the lengthy telephone conversations and the methods used in that are also the subject of a protest in the report.

As you can see from the CC report the CC upheld all my complaints except one - the constitutional date of the conference.

They upheld the view that I had a basic right to take a complaint straight to them. They upheld the right of open access to the paper. They upheld my complaint about the unconstitutional imposition of fines. They upheld my complaint that the proposed lapsings for all the different reasons were unconstitutional, and they decided to further investigate whether debt collection was being carried out in an unconstitutional way. (In other words there was a case to investigate).

This means that all the substantial complaints I made to the CC which were connected with the organisational moves to split the organisation were upheld by the CC. Nor can it be said that the CC came to these conclusions because they were supporters of the Faction, far from it. As they say themselves in the report they were two supporters of the majority and one of the Faction, they were therefore representative of the rank and file members. I believe that any three rank and file members not rendered irrational by factional heat would have come to the same conclusions.

What happened to the CC report after it was submitted to the NC is as politically instructive about the core leaders of the majority as the treatment meted out to the CC. The NC rejected all those parts of the report which upheld my complaints. (In some cases they injected the usual complications into it to obscure the issue, but essentially that was the position). They have since then avoided the circulation of the CC report despite an NC decision that it should be circulated.

That of course was not all. At that very meeting where a CC report

upholding my complaints of organisational moves against us was discussed they began the expulsion process against us.

The decision to to move politically against us and drop the organisational moves was taken before the NC met but the fact that the issue had gone to the CC was a factor in it. Kinnell had already said at the EC that the organisational moves were too confusing for comrades and therefore they would simply move politically and put us out.

The form this took (and Carolan said on the EC that there were "many ways that it could be done) was to put down a resolution on the NC demanding that we cease to be federalist and cease disruptive agitation. If we did not give a satisfactory answer to this we would be expelled. It was a catch 22 question, in order to give the answer Carolan wanted we had to admit guilt. There was no way we could do it. In any case we had no constitutional obligation to answer catch questions, our only obligation was to uphold the constitution of the WSL and build the group on the basis of the agreed policies. At a meeting of the west London branch I asked Kinnell what would be acceptable as an answer to the question? Would it be acceptable for example to reaffirm that we would uphold the constitution and build the group? No, he said. You will have to specifically state that you will cease to be disruptive.

We replied with a statement which said all we could say - essentially that we would uphold the constitution of the group. It was inevitably, rejected and 36 of us were expelled without being afforded any of the key democratic rights contained within the constitution. The constitution says the following:

"Any member has the right to defend himself or herself before a decision on disciplinary action is taken against him or her, except in the case of fines for absence or suspensions where the WSLs security and integrity is at risk. Any member subject to discipline must have written notice of the charges against him or her and the time and venue of the meeting."

Despite the fact that the constitution is absolutely specific and unambiguous no charges were ever produced and 35 of the 36 had no opportunity at all to defend themselves. No reasons have ever been given for the expulsions. We were told that we were disruptive but we were never told how we were disruptive. The only example we have ever been given is that we argued a different line to Carolan on the role of the TUC in the NGA dispute.

There is therefore no doubt what-so-ever that these expulsions flouted the constitution of the WSL. It amounts - along with the refusal on two occasions to call a conference on the signatures of 25% of the members of the organisation - to the suspension of the constitution of the group.

In the aggregate meetings some comrades loyal to Carolan have tried to argue vainly that this is not the case. Others like Carolan himself have said, well, it was against the constitution but it was necessary. There are times when the constitution has to be broken - such as revolution or illegality, but this was not such a case. Once you start saying that the constitution can be broken to suit the ends of one faction within a group you don't have a democratic centralist organisation, it is a clear sign of political degeneration.

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If more evidence was needed of this degeneration consider the relationship of all this to the call for a conference. We called for a conference to discuss the internal situation and were then expelled in advance of it. If Carolan wants to argue that the fusion was at an end why was he not prepared to argue that at a conference. How can you end the fusion of two groups of 150 people each by the vote of a handful of people at an NC? Why should the members be denied the right to discuss the state of the fusion and if it should be brought to an end?. This has come out very clear at some of the aggregates- the Midlands for example - where comrades have the chance for the first time to discuss the internal situation. A contribution from Steve B from Nottingham said it all. "Sean and Martin" decided that the fusion had come to an end he said. He is right, they did, and it is fundamentally wrong.

Now there is to be a discussion on all these things at a conference under conditions where one side of the argument is expelled in advance and consequently not there.

It is for all these reasons that we reject the expulsions, appeal against them, and call on the support of the conference. Specifically we protest about the following: The expulsions were politically motivated, although disguised behind an organisational resolution. They were designed to split the organisation. No charges were ever levelled against us as required by the constitution. Most of us had no chance to defend ourselves. We were denied a special conference on the issue after getting the required number of signatures. When a conference was called we were expelled in advance of it.

Political presentation.

The following is the political presentation we have made (through Cd Smith) at each of the aggregate meetings:

First can I say I am speaking for the 36 expelled comrades only because these are the conditions you have imposed on us. We are not an organised group, however, and I can only speak in a general sense for the whole 36. (We are 36 expelled members pursuing our appeal).

The tendency in the discussion is to discuss the situation at the level of detail, exactly how was the constitution torn up and so on. That is very important of course, but given a short contribution I think it is necessary to elevate it to the level of politics - in other words, what is the political driving force behind the detailed measures which have been taken against us, and the way they have been carried out?

The first point I want to make on this, and fundamental to it, is the characterisation Carolan and Kinnell had of the old WSL prior to fusion (and now since it is unchanged). It is an interesting and important question and the answer to it has emerged in the course of the discussion around the expulsions: we were then, and are now, says Kinnell, "non-Marxist". "Non-Marxist" - it is a very important definition. It means in other words that we were centrists. It is true that Kinnell says that we did not have fully hardened positions and therefore there was a possibility that we could be educated into Marxism by him and Carolan, but we were centrists just the same.

This position is fundamental to any analysis of the present situation faced by the group, since it means that the fusion, from the ICL side, was entirely dishonest and unprincipled. It means that the stated position

- by Carolan and Kinnell - at the time of fusion, that the old WSL was revolutionary Marxist was nothing more than a cynical lie. Equally cynical were all the statements that there were no fundamental differences between us (except that they were Marxists and we were centrists!). All the talk about "building the new group on the strengths of both groups" were equally cynical tactical statements.

Think how sick and dishonest was all the talk about the "most important fusion of Trotskyist groups since 1946" - a fusion with a centrist group? Everyone knows that you cannot talk of a fusion with a centrist group in anything like the same way as you talk about fusion with revolutionary Marxists. With a centrist group, you don't have a principled fusion but a tactical orientation. They are a centrist roadblock to revolution. You may decide to enter them, split them, break them up or whatever - but you don't have a principled fusion with them on the basis of "drawing on the strengths of both groups".

It was this characterisation of the old WSL which has determined the attitude of Carolan and Kinnell to the fusion. It could do nothing else. The fusion therefore was a tactical manoeuvre towards a 'centrist' group to gain an advantage at their expense. It could be nothing else with that political starting point. With that position, we were fair game for anything.

This essential point, that Carolan and Kinnell regard and have always regarded us as centrists, has been stated in this way at every aggregate meeting in this discussion. Kinnell has been present at most of them and he has never challenged the point - under conditions where he has challenged everything he has wanted to challenge. He has said that no-one can say whether there were good or bad intentions in his head at the time of fusion. But this is not the point. We are talking about his political characterisation of us and its implications, and that has never been challenged.

This is not to say that the ICL as a whole were a party to that. Far from it. They were taken along with the very reasonable things that Carolan and Kinnell started saying about the old WSL once they had decided on the project and began preparing the ground. But this was the approach of Carolan and Kinnell, and they ultimately determined the line of the group.

There was a completely different approach from the old WSL. Rightly or wrongly (and I think rightly) we had a completely positive attitude to the fusion which started from a desire to tackle the damaging fragmentation of the Trotskyist movement and make a contribution towards principled regroupment. In the ICL we saw another organisation, which we regarded as Trotskyist, with which the basic requirements for a fusion appeared to be present. They did not have the complication of international affiliations - although in hindsight this can be seen as a wholly negative factor. They seemed to have the same non-sectarian approach to the labour movement that we were trying to develop. And on top of this we could not see any theoretical differences which should prove impossible to contain in a single organisation.

Comrades can pass judgement on that assessment that we made. Quite clearly we misjudged Carolan and Kinnell's attitude to the fusion and their characterisation of us. But that was our basic approach (something else which has never been challenged throughout all this).

We also misjudged the basic political nature of the ICL internal regime and the role of its core leaders. We were influenced (although not in a

very conscious way) by the turn the ICL had made towards a less sectarian approach to the labour movement - although the political limitations of this, as we argued at the April conference, are now clear.

We expected, however, that this turn away from sectarianism would be reflected in the internal regime. We quickly found that it very definitely was not. We found a thoroughly rigid and sectarian internal regime built up and constructed around two or three people, and tailored to build a group in their own image.

We also found that this was compounded rather than improved by the pressure of the fusion. As the fusion went on, they became more sectarian and more clearly bureaucratic centralist. The fusion had therefore gone ahead with a built-in self-destruct mechanism within in - the basic political motivation and objectives of the ICL leaders.

The fusion, even given a principled approach by both sides, was a difficult project.

Major differences quickly emerged - most fundamentally on the nature of world imperialism and world Stalinism in the post war period. Had the fusion been genuine from both sides, however, this should not have been an insuperable problem. This would have required a development, however, since it meant containing a higher level of political differences than existed within either previous group. But that is what the fusion was all about - at least what it would have been about had it been genuine. It was what we thought it was all about.

It emerged soon after the 'fusion' what the tactics of Carolan, Kinnell and Hill would be. They would take account of our views (for a while, anyway) on a range of secondary issues, but they intended, progressively as time went on, to establish their basic politics as the line of the group, and to ultimately make them completely dominant. Nothing short of this would be acceptable to them.

It is of course by no means the first time that the Workers Fight/ICL core members have been involved in this kind of intervention into another group. It is a method which is very central both to their method of party building and to the kind of party they want to build.

Essentially, the Workers Fight/ICL have never been a party of any kind, or even a league. They have always been a faction or a tendency. They were a tendency before we "fused". They were a faction during the 'fusion' and they see themselves as a tendency in the future. In other words, they want, and intend to have, a highly centralised group, sterilised of all significant political differences; or at least any political differences which take on any organisational form or mount any kind of challenge to the leadership.

This attitude is absolutely basic to their politics and fundamentally affects everything they do - not least in the kind of regime they want in any group they build. It comes out as the kind of "one person management" they have fought for in the 'fused' group. It came out in the differences over the constitution just before the 'fusion' (which were mostly concerned with minority or individual rights, or the extent to which the organisation should be vertically controlled).

It comes out in Carolan's view that leadership should be comprised of what he calls "professionals". By this he does not mean comrades who dedicate their lives to the movement as many comrades do - but people who are paid for working full time for the group - people without jobs. It is amazing. It excludes workers by definition.

It is an attitude which affects not just the nature of the group, but

also the politics it projects as well of course. Let's take the question of the reconstruction of the Fourth International - quite an important question for Trotskyists. This attitude has led Carolan/Kinnell/Hill into a totally sectarian blind alley in relationship to the general Trotskyist movement - both in Britain and internationally. "Yes they really are all absolutely useless" says Kinnell when challenged. The implication is pretty obvious: the only healthy Trotskyist forces in the world are in the ICL - and in the ICL there are only two people who provide the theoretical positions of the group - therefore the reconstruction of the FI (or the theoretical regeneration) is down to them. Carolan and Kinnell are going to reconstruct the Trotskyist movement single-handed. It is as crude and sectarian as that.

It comes directly out of the kind of 'purity' they want. Ultimately Carolan and Kinnell are the only 'Marxists'; anyone who disagrees with them is by definition 'non-Marxist' and therefore 'absolutely useless'.

It leads to national Trotskyism, since if every thing in the Trotskyist movement outside of Britain is "absolutely useless", where do you start? If the sole source of useful theoretical knowledge amounts to two people in one country, where do you go from there? The answer is obvious: first build a group in Britain. (Theoretically this does not rule out international work, but in practical terms it does, since there is no drive for international work. It ends up with a few diplomatic encounters between Carolan and Kinnell and the occasional leader of another group).

Far from providing the starting point for the "theoretical regeneration of the Fourth International", this attitude seriously distorts any theoretical contribution that Carolan and Kinnell might make. Any serious attempt to tackle the theoretical degeneration of the Fourth International must at least draw upon the efforts and experiences of the best elements within the world movement. It must be done as a part of the mainstream debate within the world movement as a whole. It certainly cannot be done whilst cut off from those debates and whilst isolated to a national Trotskyist situation in Britain. How can a programme be re-elaborated and redeveloped for the working class of the world from such a situation? Such a thing is ridiculous.

The attitude further distorts the theoretical positions they develop, since they reject any contribution made by anyone considering themselves Trotskyist and are attracted instead to (at best) the more peripheral strands of the movement. It is a process which takes them ever further from the Trotskyist tradition.

This has been the basic political position of the Workers Fight/ICL and where it has been taking the group.

These expulsions, however, bring something new into it. What we are witnessing now is a sectarian degeneration of the group which comes out of the past attitudes but going far beyond it. This means that the group that Carolan is going to establish after these expulsions are completed is something more sectarian, more overcentralised and undemocratic than has been established in the 'fused' group. A glimpse of this can be seen in Carolan's proposal to 'reorganise' the Control Commission. Presumably it will not have the 'independence' it is supposed to have under the existing constitution of the WSL, and will be tailored to the requirements of life inside a faction.

It is not difficult to see what that regime will be like. The justification for suspending the constitution of the WSL in order to carry out these

expulsions was that the continuation of the old WF/ICL tradition stands higher than the constitution. It is an incredibly cynical thing to do. Enter a fusion on the basis of a democratic centralist constitution, knowing that you will only honour that constitution as long as it serves your political ends. As soon as it doesn't, suspend it and do as you like. Since "the WF/ICL tradition" = the views of Carolan and Kinnell, it means that any group they form cannot have any kind of constitution which means a thing. As soon as it conflicts with the requirements of their views, it will be pushed aside as fast as the constitution of the WSL was pushed aside.

Comrades are being persuaded to stay with the ICL on the basis of the argument, "Where do you stand on the political questions?" (like where do you stand on Afghanistan or the EEC, for example). They are being told to decide their positions on the basis of these "political questions", and not on the questions of regime or democracy or democratic centralism - which presumably are non-political questions.

Comrades pressurised in this way should think carefully about it. These "non-political" questions are in fact some of the most difficult political questions facing the Trotskyist movement. How does democratic centralism operate in small Trotskyist groups in today's conditions? (I think for example that it cannot simply be transposed from the model of big parties to today's small groups). What kind of regime is necessary if political differences of any consequence are going to be contained within a single group? What kind of regime is necessary to recruit members of the working class into it? How does such a group tackle the problems of the reconstruction of the Fourth International? How does it relate to the crisis-ridden FI as it is today?

If there is no answer to all these questions, then there is not much value in having the same opinions as Carolan on Afghanistan.

In our opinion, the sectarian line of Carolan and Kinnell on all these issues excludes the possibility of them building anything serious, whatever views they project on anything else. Carolan, in one of his IBs, says for example that "splits are the small change of the Trotskyist movement". How sectarian can you get?

That can only be said by someone who sees sectarian interventions into other groups regarding themselves a part of the Trotskyist tradition as a basic method of building a group. The Sparts see it that way - that is their method of "party building". (That is not to say that splits are always wrong; sometimes they are necessary. But splits conceived in the logic of Carolan's method are sectarian and discrediting to the Trotskyist movement).

I don't know if comrades have assessed the reaction of others to the WSL expulsions yet? There are different reactions. If you listen to the comments of those who regard themselves as a part of the Trotskyist tradition, they tell you, "we are not surprised - Matgamna is at it again." (It is not an unnatural reaction and is based on some understanding of reality).

If you listen to the non-Trotskyist activists in the LP and trade unions, however, you hear something else. There they say "The Trots are tearing themselves apart again." This is something else. It is a reaction which shows just how damaging this episode is to Trotskyist as a whole. It shows that these expulsions have made it much more difficult for us or anyone else to rebuild the Trotskyist movement. Not only will it be harder to recruit people to Trotskyism as a result of this, but people will be lost to Trotskyism as a result of it.

This is something else which should be borne in mind when Carolan says

that "splits are the small change of the Trotskyist movement". As we have said before - if splits are the small change, let's hope we never get on to the main problems.

This attitude should also be borne in mind by those in the post-expulsion WSL who accept the rationalisation offered by Carolan and Kinnell - that a split was "inevitable" and "necessary", and that this was as good a way as any to do it. For Carolan this is "small change" like all the rest. We regard the crisis in the WSL as disastrous and damaging. Nor do we regard a split as inevitable - certainly ^{not} without a decision of the membership. The fact is that what the NC did, ranks amongst the worst of the bureaucratic and sectarian actions which have dogged and discredited the Trotskyist movement for many years.

However, once the ICL embarked (or the ICL leadership) on the fusion in the way they did, it was bound to be damaging, but the outrageous way it was carried out - without a conference - made it far worse.

It is not a mystery, however, why Carolan and Kinnell refused to have a conference. It was not just that they have little or no concern for the import of their actions on the Trotskyist tradition - but because, on the issue of expulsions, there was no possibility at all that they would win a majority vote. NONE. It is simple arithmetic for anyone who wants to do it. (And if anyone is still in doubt, just add 36 to the anti-expulsion vote at the June 30th Conference, and you will get the answer).

Therefore, faced with a majority of the membership against them, Carolan and Kinnell went to the NC - where they did have a 'majority'; or at least they did after a suitable amount of pressure had been put on the necessary individuals.

Once they had that majority, the constitution was suspended along with all democratic rights and procedures and we were expelled. Even NC members, who were elected by conference, were expelled by the NC majority. (This was a disputed point at fusion and it is now obvious why).

Carolan has said that the expulsions were a "necessary", "Bolshevik" thing to do. He and Kinnell had decided that the fusion was at an end. Looking back, even Healy did not suspend the constitution to expel us. He went to conference first and got the constitution changed. It is incredible that we now have members agreeing that it was right and necessary to suspend the constitution. Thus the membership were not allowed to decide if the fusion was at an end or not. A secret caucus took the decision as to who would be expelled on the night before the expulsions.

It is even worse if you consider that the one predominant feeling that came from the majority - a large majority of members - at the three stage conference was an anti-split sentiment - yet we were expelled without a conference. The members are now faced with a fait accompli. They are now told: decide where you stand on the basis of political positions you hold, and accept what we have done.

This whole situation has been carried through with the membership completely disenfranchised.

There is no doubt that a split could have been avoided - and still could be - but it would require a fundamental change of attitude by Kinnell and Carolan to the old WSL side of the fusion and to the fusion itself. They would have to recognise us as revolutionary Marxist and have a regime which allowed both traditions to exist in a democratic atmosphere, with political

conflict of course, but in a comradely democratic way. We put forward the document of the to try to achieve that; whether they are capable of such a progressive change is something else.

Finally, can I say, to the extent that I can speak for the 36, that we will fight the sectarian degeneration which has taken place as long as we are able to do so. This means we will appeal to conference and attend any aggregates we are allowed to attend. After that, if we are unsuccessful and the WSL membership endorse the decisions and actions taken on their behalf by the NC majority, we will be forced to recognise that what is left is bankrupt, and form a new group.

Smith 12.6.84

At each of the aggregates a number of questions were asked of me, mostly by Kinnell. Since it appears that we will not get the chance to defend ourselves at conference beyond a formal statement, it is worth raising some of them here.

1) Previous precedents for this kind of mass expulsion.

There have only been two examples of previous precedents to these kind of mass expulsions raised in the course of the discussion, both of them so completely different that it is astounding that they are raised.

The precedent raised most persistently is the expulsion of the Internationalist Faction. Since the majority faction is making so much of this in order to try to sustain their position it is worth bringing out just how silly it is.

The charge against IT was that they had repeatedly and openly declared that they regarded themselves as outside the WSL constitution and would not recognise it. We on the other hand have made a written statement to the NC declaring that we do recognise the WSL constitution, we will honour it and will work to build the organisation.

At the TILC meeting in April last year the IT refused to act under the discipline of the WSL, supported a resolution moved in the meeting which was openly declaring to be designed to split the WSL and then made a formal written statement at the end of the meeting calling on the other TILC groups to intervene in the WSL and to fight to remove WSL nominees from the TILC executive. The key paragraph said the following:

"We urge the delegations present at this TILC conference to repudiate the openly revisionist politics of the WSL leadership, systematically prosecute the fight against this revisionism, and drive all traces of revisionism from the TILC Secretariat by replacing those who have abandoned Trotskyism or are incapable of defending it with comrades who are committed to the building and development of TILC on the basis of consistent Trotskyism."

That statement was made by Morrow on behalf of the IT. Such a statement is completely indefensible in any terms of democratic centralism and effectively places those making it outside of the organisation. Piggott and I attended a meeting of the IT in Leicester, which we reported to the EC, where we tried to persuade them out of this course

of action. We told them that if they stood by the statement there was no way that we could or would defend them. They were given two weeks notice of charges on these lines and then called to the NC. Right up to the end they were told that the charges would be dropped if they withdrew the statement and accepted the constitution. They however were determined to be expelled and would do nothing to defend themselves. They did not even attend the NC hearing. I abstained on the vote because whilst I considered that the actions of the IT were indefensible it had been created by Carolan in the first place. The IT had stupidly responded to his provocations and had been pushed where he wanted them, outside the group.

But where ~~are~~ there any similarities to the treatment we have received. We were given no charges, the NC majority adopted a resolution which was a catch 22 and the EC demanded that we answer it to the satisfaction of the NC majority. When we said we would honour the constitution of the group we were suspended and expelled.

The second example given was the expulsion of the second wave of Sparts from the old WSL. But they were members of another organisation, sent into the WSL on a wrecking exercise. It was not a disputed point they made no attempt to deny it. Where is the similarity there? Any comparison is preposterous. What outside organisation were we members of? Please tell us! Did we enter the WSL on a wrecking exercise? Not even Carolan or Kinnell who are prepared to say anything for factional advantage would suggest that.

2) What was the "disruption" we have been accused of?

I have been asked this at two aggregates and it is a very interesting question.

I have made the point on each occasion that "disruption" is the "charge" usually used in bureaucratic actions of this kind because it puts the onus on the accused to prove themselves innocent. And if you fight too hard to prove your innocence that fight itself is used as an example of it.

This is why such charges should always be made specific if the procedure is to be to any degree democratic. This is why we have asked for specific charges. Tell us how we have disrupted the group and when did we do it. We can then talk about it and see if it holds water. That is why the constitution calls for charges to be laid. The IT were charged with refusing to recognise the constitution and specific statements could be quoted to show that this was true, that is why they did not deny it.

Throughout the whole of this discussion only one example has been offered as to how we "disrupted" the organisation, and this came out of a direct question we put to Kinnell at the West London branch meeting. The only example he could find was that we argued a different line to the majority on the role of the TUC in the NGA struggle. We argued a different line and that became disruption. No wonder Kinnell decided not to put specific charges forward, how would that look on a charge sheet? The implications of regarding political disagreements as disruption are pretty far reaching.

3) Why did you disband the faction?

I have been asked this at most of the meetings, which presumably

comes out of the silly way the majority have used it in constructing their case.

It was in fact the logical step for us to take. The faction was based on a number of political positions, which had been discussed through inside the group and established as substantial differences. The purpose of the Faction was to argue and agitate around those positions and win support for them. As soon as the expulsion moves were made against us we were in a completely different situation. It was no longer a matter of agitating for political positions but of organising against bureaucratic expulsions. For that we needed, and saw the opportunity, of uniting with a much broader layer in the group than the layer which agreed with the politics of the Faction. We therefore disbanded the Faction to remove any obstacles to that. Had we not been expelled so quick we would have sought to have an organisational form with them on the matters of democracy and the regime.

3) Did Smith do the job of industrial organiser?

It is not good for the nerves to be asked such a question when the question is known to have been pushed by Carolan who is absolutely notorious for not meeting his obligations - like joint editor of the magazine since fusion for example - and who has been exempted from paper sales and branchwork by the EC majority.

I have however answered the question along the lines I answered it in IB 85 and I refer comrades to that - which gives an account of the industrial work I was involved in and adequately refutes the allegation which is intirely factionally motivated.

There is another point to be made about it as well however. What if for the sake of argument we say that it was true, Smith had not adequately done the industrial work, or even fallen down badly on it; is that a matter for expulsion? It might be right to remove him from the job - as often happens when comrades fail to meet commitments. There might be a case for removing him from the EC - but expulsion! And even if there was a case for expelling Smith for it is there a case for expelling 36 people because Smith fell down on the industrial work? Such a thing is ridiculous.

The purpose of course was rather different. It was part of the moves to discredit the Faction in order that other members would more readily accept outrageous action against them.

4) Why have the expelled people refused to collaborate with the WSL?

This a question Kinnell asked at each meeting, and as I have said each time I found it the most difficult to answer because the hypocrisy within it is so breathtaking. There are two points to make.

Firstly what kind of people is it who expel you one week and then demand that you collaborate in the labour movement with them the next? As I have said in the meetings, if the WSL majority want to collaborate with us the best way is to do it inside the WSL - uphold our appeals and that will create the best conditions for collaboration. Expelling us without charges and with the constitution suspended does not create the best conditions.

The second point is that despite all this we have not refused to collaborate! The letter we sent in reply does not say that or anything like

it. We are again into a situation where the talents of Kinnell are used to twist and distort and confuse - a factor which is now a major part of the homogeneity of the majority grouping. Comrades should take this as a concrete example of it. This is the letter we sent:

May 2nd 1984

Dear *cd Kinnell*

I have received your letter of April 17th proposing discussion on possible practical collaboration with us.

Can I say that your proposal seems to be based on a misunderstanding of the situation. We are 36 expelled members of the WSL who have elected to exercise our right of appeal against the expulsions to conference. The first thing therefore is for this process to be carried out - hopefully with more democracy than has been evident up to now.

This being the case there are two points: Firstly could you answer the question I asked at the disciplinary hearing as to whether each expelled member will have the right to defend himself or herself at the conference or whether this will be restricted as it was at the NC? Secondly we would be pleased if you would notify us as soon as possible of the times, dates and venues of the preconference meetings in order that we can attend and make a statement in line with your commitment to that effect.

Yours Fraternally

Smith.

So how is that a refusal to collaborate? I challenge anyone to substantiate such a position with the text in front of them!

5) Why did some of the expelled people vote for an SL nominee for one of the officer positions at the LCI conference.

I have said at the aggregates to this question - which Kinnell always asks - that I am surprised that this happened, since the suspended comrades were well organised for the LCI conference. I have also said that while it might have been wrong it is an understandable thing to happen. The comrades were expelled from the WSL on that very day. If such things happen in such conditions the onus as I see it is on those who created the situation - Carolan and Kinnell created it and they are repensible.

In the course of the discussion in the Midlands aggregate, however, Mason made a point from a different angle. He said that there had been a problem in the past with SO slates at LCI AGM. He pointed to an example where having whipped people to vote for an SO slate some of those thus elected failed to make any effort to do the jobs they had been elected to - this included Carolan who was elected as press officer, never did it, or attended executive meetings and resigned six months later without explanation.

Smith, 21st June.