

Resolution on the MO, our tasks and tactics.

Part 1 - background, not for voting.

The trade Unions: The British workers' movement remains politically dominated by a reformist, bureaucratic leadership whose power base lies in their control over the mass trade union movement. Materially and politically it has been the trade union bureaucracy and its block votes which have formed the bedrock of the Labour Party leadership. Indeed whether Labour is in or out of Downing St, it is the trade union bureaucracy which in practice at every level acts to contain the class struggle and restrict the strength of the proletariat in its conflicts with the capitalist class and their state apparatus. In Britain, where even the slump has not reduced unionisation to less than 50% of the employed workforce, it is inescapably true that there can be no socialist revolution without the unremitting struggle of revolutionists to mobilise the rank and file in the unions on demands and struggles which can break them from the straitjacket of reformist politics and reformist bureaucrats, and transform the unions into instruments of struggle. Without serious work to recruit workers from the industrial unions by intervening and giving leadership in their struggles, we cannot build a revolutionary party with roots in the proletariat.

The Labour Party: Constructed by the trade union leaders as the means of furthering their own politics of gradualism and class collaboration, the Labour Party continues to serve as the central focus of the reformist illusions of the working class, and thus as the central strategic political obstacle to the construction of a mass revolutionary party. The potency of the LP as a focus for political activity of committed militants at rank and file level was increased by the democratic reforms and more radical policies that have been pushed through in the aftermath of the 1979 election debacle. It is additionally true that many thousands of class conscious militants not themselves active in the LP and many millions of working class voters - or non-voters - relate politically to the Labour Party as the "alternative" to the Tories. For these reasons the Labour Party cannot be ignored if we are serious about breaking mass layers of workers away from reformism. While it is plain that the LP itself - certainly in anything resembling the shape it has today - will not be transformed (least of all by a series of linear democratic reforms) into a revolutionary party, a mass Marxist party can only be built in the all-sided struggle to expose the limitations of reformism and present a consistent alternative policy and perspective.

Forces outside the unions and LP: The brutal reality of mass unemployment, coupled with sexual and racial oppression mean that the organised labour movement is so structured as to exclude or marginalise the majority of youth, women and oppressed minorities. Yet it is among these downtrodden and alienated layers that some of the most militant and determined fighters can and must emerge. Our task is not to tail-end the spontaneous struggles and frustration of these sections of society, but to offer them forms of organisation and a leadership which can consolidate their strength and mobilise them in the struggle against the Tory enemy and their labour lieutenants.

This means that we must fight against the understandable suspicion and hostility which these forces have towards the unions and the LP as they exist today, and direct their energies towards the fight for a new, revolutionary leadership and mass organisations of the class.

Part 2 - for voting

Our fight In the post-Blackpool situation in the MO and the unions we must recognise three starting points:

- 1) The necessity to find the means to bring our programme and

perspective - both in practical interventions and through forms of propaganda work - into every arena of the class struggle, if we are not to dissolve into the reformist milieu.

2) Our rejection of any sectarian tendency to turn our backs on the MO or on any of the arenas of struggle through which the working class is fighting back against the Tory offensive.

3) Our determination to pursue to its very limits the struggle against bans and proscriptions of revolutionary politics within the workers' movement: this struggle, to succeed, needs to be waged as far as possible within rather than from outside the MO.

Our strength is that we bring into the fight the politics of class action, using the sharp edge of battles involving the rank and file to expose the political and practical limitations of the reformist bureaucracy in both the unions and the MO. From this position, we must retain the stance agreed in the 1981 Perspectives of struggling both alongside and against the existing left within the labour movement, with a perspective of raising the best elements to the political level of our revolutionary programme - without in any false, sectarian way organisationally counterposing ourselves to, them.

This means: (a) We do not abandon our work in the MO or use the witch-hunt situation as a pretext for an "Oehlerite binge" of party proclamation and abstentionism. If anything we need greater organisation and centralisation of our MO work to maximise our struggle against the witch-hunt and draw the maximum political benefit in terms of political discussion on the crisis of the MO.

(b) We must forge ahead both in the unions and in the MO in the fight for policies which must combine the question of democratisation of the labour movement with the fight for a programme and policies which can offer the basis for the building of an alternative, revolutionary leadership, and a broad Marxist current. This in turn will assist us in the task of exposing the political bankruptcy of the reformist left (AES, viability, Parliamentarism, etc).

(c) At the same time we must develop our tactical means for work amongst the broad oppressed layers outside the organised labour movement.

(d) Our united fronts against the witch-hunt must not lead to any political compromises with the left reformists. We should consider ways of further drawing out the essence of their politics through discussions and debates in the pages of SX. We must maintain our clear political independence, irrespective of pressures.

In practice: (1) SX must stand at the forefront of the fight against the register and the expulsions. In this fight it must maintain its present political profile - and extend the debate to policies as well as democracy.

(2) If/when the register is accepted by the bulk of the other left groupings, and if there appears to be any political purpose to be achieved by going through such formalities given the nature of the present NEC, SX may tactically decide to apply for the register, on the basis of its current practices and politics.

(4) If (as seems certain) SX is proscribed, the paper should in any case continue as a weekly under the same name, as the "illegal" press sold by our expelled MO members, by non-MO members and - with appropriate precautions where necessary - by MO members. It should pursue the fight for readmission, the lifting of all proscriptions, and continue to orientate to the MO left as well as to forces outside the MO.

(5) In conjunction with this "illegal" press we should seek "legal" openings - possibly along the lines of "B", even "T". We may launch a new "National B" or new broad groups to facilitate such MO work. But such "illegal" work would necessarily be of limited relevance to the large sections of trade unionists and unorganised layers who are not active inside the LP - and would

be even more limited by the lower political profile which would certainly be forced upon us. We should regard such press as the instrument for a specific field of our work, as a distinct and crucial aspect of our general work, rather than devoting (as at present) the vast majority of our material and organisational resources to it. To follow such a course would jeopardise our ability to reach militants in the trade unions and among the more unorganised layers - and confine our work almost exclusively to the ranks of MO activists.

(5) In any event, we should also take steps at once to regularise publication of WSR, and to make this a magazine which deals in detail with the acute crisis of leadership facing the British workers' movement as a whole, enabling us to attract a wide readership in the workers' movement.

Cunliffe. Oct 1962.