

## I R E L A N D

1. B. 6

In issue no. 11 of W.F. there was a criticism of the Irish Republican Army bombing on so-called Bloody Friday. The reason given was because of "indiscriminate bombing of civilians." In issue no. 12 a correction was printed. Both the criticism and the correction it seems to me show a serious mistake on the part of the group. For a start, the IRA immediately explained that they had given very adequate warnings, this was printed in the Irish papers. The IRA has a 50-year history of telling the truth even when it goes against them - when they issue a disclaimer we should automatically believe them. Granted that the comrades may not have had this information at the time (although they should have) I think the more serious question is our actual attitude to criticism of the IRA. The correction says:

"The real criticism of the IRA is that its current tactics lend themselves to such use by the army and are, even with warnings, largely indifferent to the effects on ordinary people".

This is a slur on our support for the IRA. All war action can be used by the enemy and let's not forget who happens to own the propaganda machine. It is stupid to say because the IRA bombs, and civilians get killed, then the army can use this, the army makes its own excuses. And then to say "and are largely indifferent to the effects on ordinary people" is a complete falsification, you ignore, comrades, what the IRA has been fighting and dying for. I think two questions arise:

1. Is the tactic correct ?
2. Have we a right to criticise ?

As far as I am concerned the tactic is completely justified. The correction says:

"The line at which damage to the economy and the rulers of Ireland merges with the help they give to the army by provoking the Protestant workers and demoralising many Catholics is increasingly difficult to distinguish."

Let's face it comrades, any successful action against British imperialism is going to provoke a reaction from the Protestants (even targets that are purely military). So what do comrades suggest: that the I.R.A. just relies on defensive actions? No: we must stand for the right of the I.R.A. to kick out British imperialism and all targets are justified. Also, what is the evidence for this demoralising of Catholics. As a British Army spokesman said (quoted in An Phoblacht): "The no-go areas are still no-go" (There are many more examples but I think this is the most important because of the contrast with the reaction in 1969) The Catholic population is not demoralised.

As for the second question, I think the answer is "no". We have no right to criticize the tactics in Ireland. There Republicans are dying, being murdered by the British Army and the U.D.A. We have no right to say this or that bombing was wrong. Republicans have been killed removing bombs where they thought civilians would have died. Only those who struggle can criticise - and we do not struggle in the fight for Irish freedom.

### Our attitude to Trotskyists in Ireland outside the Republican movement.

By this I mean the I.S. group (Socialist Workers Movement), the I.M.G. group (Revolutionary Marxist Group) and the League for a Workers Republic. These groups (certainly the I.S. and L.W.R.) have a sectarian attitude towards the republican movement - particularly in the South. They criticize the I.R.A. and Sinn Fein for their policy in the South - a look at An Phoblacht will show that the I.R.A. attitude to Union Jack Lynch and his henchmen. The I.R.A. takes active part in the present rent struggle, strikes and occupations, and has initiated co-operatives.

If the Trotskyist comrades really believe in the struggle in the North really support the I.R.A., then why do they not help the Republicans in the South which is the life-line for the North. It is completely hypocritical to say "support the I.R.A. against British Imperialism" and then do nothing to help - but criticize. The Trotskyists in Ireland are talking to themselves. They cannot expect people to take them seriously if they are not helping and fighting alongside the I.R.A. They shout out from the corners "Yes lads, we support you" as they march North to fight the British Army and then attack them

when they are in the South (I may be unfair to the comrades expressing it like that but the basic point stands.)

The criticism of the Provisional I.R.A. as "Pure Green" republicans is answered well in An Phoblacht 9 where there is an excellent article showing the I.R.A. as continuators of Connolly. A few examples should serve to dispense with the "pure green" myth:

1. Their activities in the South mentioned above.
2. Their correct criticism of the N.L.F. as Stalinist.
3. Their criticism of the two nations theory.
4. Their programme for a Workers' Republic.

Our attitude to the Trotskyists in Ireland must be - Join the Republican movement, fight and then you can talk and criticize.

John Boyd

#### A BRIEF NOTE ON A PROBLEM OF FORMULATING A PROGRAMME AGAINST UNEMPLOYMENT

In this note I intend to pose what I consider a problem. There is no claim on my part to have found the solution to the problem. I just want to point out a difficulty in a formulation that we use in our "A Strategy to Beat the Dole Queue" (WF No.1). The formulation is also a very common one on the left in Britain. In "A Strategy to Beat the Dole Queue" we wrote:

"The minimum wage must apply to everyone employed or not - it is the bosses responsibility if their system can't provide jobs. Our slogan must be work or full pay"

Frequently this same demand is expressed as "work or full maintenance". Now it may be that this latter formulation is actually rather a better one, because it is rather more clear (though still not totally) that one is talking about the already unemployed.

The point is, "A Strategy to Beat the Dole Queue" is not a strategy for those already on the dole. It makes no pretence to be this either. It is quite clear that the demands: NO MORE PRODUCTIVITY DEALS, A SHORTER WORKING WEEK WITH NO LOSS OF PAY, NO OVERTIME, A NATIONAL MINIMUM WAGE, WORK OR FULL PAY, CONTROL OVER HIRING AND FIRING, OCCUPY FACTORIES THREATENED WITH REDUNDANCY, NATIONALISATION UNDER WORKERS' CONTROL, are all demands relating to those at work. All but one: WORK OR FULL PAY.

At least I hope so. Because it seems to me that if this demand is a demand for those at work then it is a demand that is likely to prepare the way for defeat.

The struggle on the docks that ended with the acceptance of the Aldington-Jones report was against running down the number of jobs. It was absolutely essential for militants to say: no reduction of jobs NOT EVEN IF THE SEVERANCE PAY IS QUITE SUBSTANTIAL. In other words the struggle was not for certain concessions on the basis of an accepted redundancy (as say at one time in the mines) but rather against the redundancies as such.

Now to say WORK OR FULL PAY actually accepts the principle of redundancy. It might be argued that if one were to receive FULL PAY why not accept a redundancy. The answer is simple: in the actual class struggle the admission of their being a price on the job plays both ideologically and practically into the hands of the ruling class. Ideologically it is a concession to the notion of a fixed value for the job unopen to negotiation (as such a price clearly would also not be open to negotiation - after all you are not in a job). Practically it is a dangerous tack to take because the price seems always open to negotiation. Thus substantial improvements in redundancy pay might be seen by workers as pretty much full pay or the nearest they can get to full pay just now.

If it is a demand for those not at work (like work or full maintenance) then it should be more explicit on this matter and should be withdrawn from its position in "A Strategy to Beat the Dole Queue" and seen as a subsection of the slogan that precedes it: NATIONAL MINIMUM WAGE. This confusion (or is it just the) must be cleared up right away.

AH

LETTER FROM T. DUFFY AND F. ROSE

commenting on certain criticisms of Real Steel News made in the previous I.B.

- 1) The I.R.Act:- We agree that our coverage is not all it might have been but at the present with the state of the steel industry unemployment is the major issue. However the steel fraction is working on an article based on a Middlesbrough Trades Council Resolution (put up by WF members) for a "General Strike" to kill the bill. This will also link up with most of MT's comments from section 3).\*
- 2) Where we stand; workers' control etc.:- We agree with this comment and also feel that this is in common with WF and have sent an NC resolution in on this question.\*\*
- 4) Steel news and WF\*\*\*:- This we fear has been due to an administrative fault at our end and will be put right.
- 5) The extension of the area covered by RSN:- the fraction believe that more help could be given by the centre with this. Mailing addresses, contacts help from branches (i.e. Bristol could scout out S.Wales) would be greatly appreciated as RSN is still young and with a little help may become a national steel paper.

\* criticism: that the coverage of unemployment lacks a clear focus.

\*\* criticism: that treatment of slogan "workers control" was too abstract

\*\*\* criticism: WF has to glean from RSN instead of comrades in steel sending in material separately

WHAT IS A "MASS PAPER"? by Leon Trotsky (November 30, 1935)

Below we reproduce extracts from Trotsky's "What is a Mass Paper" written to the members of the Bolshevik-Leninist group in France. The complete article is to be found in "Writings of Leon Trotsky (1935 - 1936)" published by Pathfinder Press. We are only reproducing extracts because some of the criticism relates specifically to an appeal which was published for Communo, and most of that is not immediately relevant. Notes follow.

- 1) What is a mass paper? The question is not new. It can be said that the whole history of the revolutionary movement has been filled with discussions on the mass paper. It is the elementary duty of an organisation to make its political newspaper as accessible as possible to the masses. This task cannot be effectively solved except as a function of the growth of the organisation and its cadres who must pave the way to the masses for the newspaper - since it is not enough, it is understood, to call a publication a "mass paper" to have the masses accept it in reality. But quite often revolutionary impatience (which transforms itself easily into opportunist impatience) leads to this conclusion: The masses do not come because our ideas are too complicated and our slogans too advanced. It is therefore necessary to simplify our programme, lighten our slogans - in short, to throw out ballast. Basically this means: Our slogans must correspond not to the objective situation, not to the relation of classes analysed by the Marxist method, but must correspond to subjective appreciations (extremely superficial and inadequate) of what the masses can or cannot accept. But what masses? The mass is not homogeneous. It develops. It feels the pressure of events. It will accept tomorrow what it will not accept today. Our cadres will blaze the trail with increasing success for our ideas and slogans which prove themselves correct because they are confirmed by the march of events and not by subjective and personal appreciations.
- 2) A mass paper is distinguished from a theoretical review or from an organ of cadres not by the slogans but by the manner in which they are presented. The cadre newspaper unfolds for its readers all the processes of the Marxist analysis. The mass paper only presents its results basing itself at the same time on the immediate experience of the masses themselves. It is far more difficult to write in a Marxist manner for the masses than it is to write for

cadres.

3) Let us suppose for a moment that the GBL (1) consented to simplify our programme to renounce the slogans for the new party, for the Fourth International to renounce implacable criticism of the social patriots (naming them by name) to renounce the systematic criticism of the "Revolutionary Left" (2) and of Pivert (3) himself. I do not know if this newspaper would become with the help of a magic ring a mass paper. I doubt it. But it would in any case become an SAPIst or Pivertist paper (4). The essence of the Pivert tendency is just that: to accept revolutionary slogans but not to draw from them the necessary conclusions which are the break with Blum (5) and Zyromski (6) the creation of the new party and the new International. Without that all the "revolutionary" slogans become null and void. At the present stage the Pivert agitation is a sort of opium for the revolutionary workers. Pivert wants to teach them that one can be for revolutionary struggle for "revolutionary action" (to borrow a phrase now in fashion) and remain at the same time on good terms with chauvinist canaille (7). Everything depends on your tone, you see? It is the tone that makes the music. If the tiger cooed like a pigeon the whole world would be enchanted. But we with our rough language we must say that the leaders of the "Revolutionary Left" are demoralising and prostituting revolutionary consciousness.

I ask you: if we renounce the slogans which are dictated by the objective situation and which constitute the very essence of our programme in what shall we be distinguished from the Pivertists? In nothing. We would only be second-class Pivertists. Now if the masses should have to decide for the Pivertists they would prefer the first class to the second.

4) I take up the little appeal printed for the Commune - organ of revolutionary (?) action (?). This document provides us with a striking demonstration (unsought by its authors) of some of the ideas expressed above. "The Commune will speak the language of the factories and the fields. It will tell of the misery which reigns there. It will express its passions and rouse to revolt." This is a very laudable intention, although the masses know perfectly well its own misery and its feelings of revolt (stifled by the patriotic apparatuses with the aid of the Pivertists). What the mass can demand of a newspaper is a clear programme and a correct leadership. But precisely on this question the appeal is utterly silent. Why? Because it wants more to conceal its ideas than to express them. It accepts the S.A.P.ist (centrist) recipe: in seeking the line of least resistance do not say what is. The programme of the Fourth International that's for "us", for the big timers of the leadership. And the masses? What are the masses? They can rest content with a quarter or a tenth even of the programme. It's mentality we call opportunist aristocracy. It is at the same time an adventurist attitude, a very dangerous attitude comrades. It is not that of the Marxists.

.....  
And here is the high point (of the appeal - WF): "The Commune is launched by militants belonging to various tendencies to bring about the rise of a great army of communards". What does this mean this unknown crew of anonymous, unknown "various tendencies"? What tendencies are involved? Why are they (still unknown) grouped outside and against the other tendencies? The purpose of creating a "great army of communards" is laudable. But it is necessary not to forget that this army once created (1871) suffered a terrific catastrophe because that magnificent army lacked a programme and a leadership.

5) (Here Trotsky discusses the relation between the GBL and the SFIO)...

6) Revolution is a living moving organ which can become the organ of the proletarian youth. (8) To accomplish this task Revolution must not, however, fall into the shadows of the Commune's confusion but to concretise its position - i.e. definitely accept the slogans of the Bolshevik-Leninists.

7) La Verité is an absolute necessity. But it must liberate itself from the centrist influences which resulted in the appeal of Commune. La Verité must resume its fighting intransigent character. The most important object of its criticism is Pivertism which is opposed to Leninism and has thus become, by its own characterisation (9) a reactionary tendency.

#### NOTES on "WHAT IS A 'MASS PAPER'":

- 1)... GBL = Groupe Bolchevik-Leniniste. French Trotskyists.
- 2)... Revolutionary Left = Gauche Revolutionnaire group founded by Marceau Pivert in 1935 of a right-centrist nature.
- 3)... Marceau Pivert (1895 - 1958) was a member of the Bataille Socialiste tendency in the SFIO (French Labourite group) and organiser of the Gauche Revolutionnaire group. He served as an aide to Blum in 1936, but after his group was ordered to dissolve in 1937, he left the SFIO and founded the Workers and Peasants Socialist Party (PSOP) in 1938. After World War II, he returned to the SFIO.
- 4)... S.A.P. (Socialist Workers Party of Germany) was formed in October 1931 after the Social Democrats expelled several left-wingers headed by Max Seydewitz. In the spring of 1932 a split occurred in the German Communist Right Opposition (KPO the Brandlerites) and a group of 800 led by Jakob Wachler entered the S.A.P. When Seydewitz and other founders withdrew, the ex-Brandlerites assumed the leadership of the S.A.P. which then claimed 14,000 members; its numbers were greatly reduced after Hitler came to power. In August 1933 at a Conference in Paris sponsored by the IAG (International Labour Community) the S.A.P. joined the International Left Opposition in signing the Declaration of Four proclaiming the necessity to work for a new International. Later the S.A.P. became an active opponent of the movement for the Fourth International.
- 5)... Leon Blum (1872 - 1950) was the top SFIO leader in the 1930s and premier of the first People's Front government in 1936.
- 6)... Jean Zyromsky (1890 - ) founder of Bataille Socialiste tendency in the SFIO, was a party functionary with pro-Stalinist leanings. An advocate of "organic unity" in the mid-1930s he joined the Communist Party after World War II. The relation between these various figures is briefly best described by quoting from Trotsky's article (in the same volume) "For Committees of Action not the People's Front": "Pivert clutches at Zyromski, who clutches at Blum, who in turn together with Thorez (CP leader) clutches at Herriot, who clutches at Laval (who collaborated with the NAZIS)."
- 7)... canaille = rabble, mob.
- 8)... Revolution was the organ of the Youth Entente. It was not the organ of the GBL but they participated in it.
- 9)... Earlier in the article Trotsky said Marceau Pivert declared two or three months ago that the struggle against "Trotskyism" is the sign of a reactionary tendency." But now Pivert took to that very struggle.

#### SOME COMMENTS AND REFLECTIONS on "WHAT IS A 'MASS PAPER'":

The central problem of a revolutionary paper is its relation to the class, both politically and technically. That is the paper must express the historic interests of the class relating them to the precisely evaluated objective situation of that class while at the same time using every sensitivity in presentation.

But if the problem were exhausted with this it would be fairly easily posed. However, the revolutionary paper is the organ not just of some uncorporeal political line, it is the organ of a very real, tangible grouping. Because of this questions of the relation between the organ of the party and the class cannot be seen without discussing first the relation between the party itself and the class. As Trotsky wrote in July 1934 (in *The League Faced with a Turn*): "It is not enough for a revolutionist to have correct ideas. Let us not forget that correct ideas have already been set down in *Capital* and in *The Communist Manifesto*. But that has not prevented false ideas from being broadcast. It is the task of the revolutionary party to weld together the correct ideas with the mass labour movement. Only in this way can an idea become a driving force... A revolutionary organisation does not mean a paper and its readers..."

This must be understood in two ways. Firstly the general and universally valid fact it is the "cadres who must pave the way to the masses for the newspaper" that again "our cadres will blaze the trail for our ideas and slo-

gans...." This must be understood: at all times it is the action of the party in struggling for the realisation of the programme that breaks ground among the working class. The party is not simply, as the IMG would have it, the disseminator of rounded ideas, of revolutionary analyses. And inasmuch as it explains the world to the working class it does this through a combination of literary (the paper) and personal (activity of individuals) intervention. In other words, if the paper is seen as the weapon and the member is simply the man or woman who delivers it, only half the job has been done. The paper must be a weapon, but even a cutlass might be used to spread butter if it is not in the hands of a warrior. The paper is a weapon, you must be the warriors.

That is why Trotsky emphasises the question of blazing a trail. Let us look at it another way. Does our paper (or any other) convert racialists into anti racialists? Does it convert those who believe that capitalism is only 'human nature' into believing that we must overthrow capitalism? I don't think it does this. So what should we do? Write a paper only for the already converted, relying on some hoped-for future radicalisation in the working class to provide us with more and more of the already converted? No, clearly not! We understand that the paper can direct and organise, inform and round out, the more or less converted, and also set people thinking. OK, so it's not completely useless. But almost! Yes it is almost useless if the members of the revolutionary organisation are not waging a constant struggle to bring more and more people into the orbit of revolutionary politics and completely to a revolutionary world outlook.

It is in this sense that Trotsky means that a political newspaper cannot be made accessible to the masses "except as a function of the growth of the organisation ..."

Now, as I said, this is always true. (And I cannot pass over this point without remarking that all too few of our comrades understand this. If they did, the carrying out of SM's exposition of 'processing contacts' would already have gone on smoothly). But what changes - and modifies the importance of the above - is the relationship of forces amongst the political groups and their overall as well as individual relation to the class, ideologically and organisationally.

We belong to a very small political tendency. We cannot massively affect the general receptivity to our ideas, although we never stop trying. If we try to relate to a backward class while not having blazed the trail for our ideas by the personal intervention of our comrades and sympathisers we will always stand in danger of adaptation. This adaptation to backwardness is not inevitable, nor is drowning in a strong current, it is just very difficult to avoid. This is always a problem with rank-and-file papers, but it is also a problem with the main paper, WF too.

This provides us with constant problems. Let's take an imaginary situation. Imagine we criticise a trade union leader with a really abusive sharpness. And imagine further and as this is usually our situation, it will not be difficult to imagine, that we have no workers in that union. The criticism is - even if we get it to people in that industry - almost bound to be rejected. Why? Because we are not present in the arena in which that struggle against our ideas is fought. It is literally a "no contest" - the union leader wins. How do we get round this? Well, first of all, let's be absolutely clear, we do not drop the criticism! This totally opportunist funk of revolutionary responsibility is best characterised among Trotskyist groups by the IMG. Manchester comrades will remember IMG odes. Dolan and Whelan actually stating that they agreed with the Stalinists that Trotskyists who criticised the leadership during the sit-in period were 'splitters'!

What we do is that we put forward quite precise ideas of our own and measure the trade union leaders against those ideas. Even this is difficult. But it avoids the frenetic imbecility of the SLL's "denunciations" and the flagrant opportunism of the IMG (as well as IS and others - mainly the Stalinists).

This practical example has been confirmed time and time again. Most of all in Bolton: if WF had had just one member inside the Shop Stewards' Quarterlies, they could not have excluded us from use of the AUEW hall, intimidated our contacts and slandered us - at least not without a massive fight in which we would almost certainly have won many more contacts and some members too.

That's the first point I want to make about Trotsky's article. It is, you note, what Trotsky takes for granted.

This small tendency of ours then must remain absolutely clear and principled, avoiding these terrible pressures of adaptation.

Trotsky says much about the nature of adaptation. The whole matter may be reduced to that of so-called "revolutionary impatience". The relationship to the masses is seen as coming prior to the base in the masses. This cannot be.

A small revolutionary tendency cannot produce a popular mass paper not because it does not have the financial resources or channels of distribution of its literature, but because the basis of the class's receptivity to even popularly expressed revolutionary ideas (after all that attack their habits and their heroes that do not just mumble about the cosmos) is unlikely to have been formed if the revolutionary tendency is still small.

The exceptions are only in cases where ideas which are in general revolutionary are prevalent because of factors other than the small tendency. But in this situation even as the small tendency is more or less unknown it will be difficult for it to put forward its particular revolutionary ideas.

Let us look at two examples: the GBL that Trotsky talks about, and us, WF.

The GBL existed at a time when the French working class was immensely militant, when it could have made the revolution. In fact, the action of the Stalinists diverted it from that path and led it through compromise to defeat and from defeat to Fascism. What could the GBL do? Not criticize the Stalinists as messrs. IMG in the figures of Dolan and Whelan would have us believe? No. They had, as Trotsky pointed out, a firm and clear duty to do this.

Was there a receptivity to revolutionary ideas in general amongst the masses? Yes. Could the GBL then gain the ear of the masses by producing a revolutionary paper? No. To do that they entered the SFIO in what was known as the French Turn of 1936. In other words, the ear of the masses was gained by the organisation with its reason, the paper, not by the paper alone.

But the tiny GBL did contemplate a mass paper. Could it be a paper of a mass circulation? Only slowly. Then why did they not produce either only a theoretical journal or a "cadre newspaper" as Trotsky puts it? Because at a time when the masses are searching for the revolutionary road to be haunting other byeways is criminal. It would have meant completely vacating the arena of struggle in which the class itself was taking up the fight leaving it open to the Stalinists, the Social Democrats and the rubbish to the right of them simply because it did not suit the gradual development of the tendency.

But it did lead them to adaptation as any impatient attitude does.

We are not in the same situation but ours is not altogether dissimilar. A revolutionary tendency that confined itself to being a cadre newspaper producer might as well quit now. As we stated clearly when we left IS, we have to produce a paper which can relate to the class struggle as it mounts at the present time. But we do not have the tried and trained members in every field, in every union and mass organisation. In fact we have very few members and they are not all experienced.

Consequently we must combine two functions, that of a mass paper relating directly to the working class without contact with our comrades (made possible in part by the radicalisation of the working class) and of a cadre paper relating principally to our members, sympathisers and contacts and only through them to the class. Our paper then is a - as Cannon put it - "combination tool".

I believe that if we keep these ideas in mind we will not make the errors many have made in their use of the paper, will understand how to relate it to "processing contacts" will understand what considerations should guide the editorial board and also how to angle our writing.

I cannot pass on without remarking that exactly the same considerations as those relating to mass papers relate to mass work. Thus for instance, cde. Stratford's idea that "we will win people on the basis of our work in the class" and some S.E. London comrades' conception that a party is "built from the bottom up" that is by its day to day work in the class, are quite false. In the case of the S.E. London comrades this can be understood as they do very good daily



work in the class and are not acquainted with the problems of the lack of a substantial cadre in the group - problems which exist in many localities. Cde. Stratford does know this though his ideas cannot therefore spring from any ignorance of problems or immersion in daily work, but from more fundamentally wrong notions.

What remains to be pointed out I think, in Trotsky's article is the distinction he makes between "subjective appreciation" and the appreciation of subjectivity. The former's subjective nature lies in the the type of appreciation, not what is being appreciated, the object of appreciation. That is why Trotsky praises the intention of Commune to "speak the language of the factories and the fields" (rather than IMG-ese). That is why he says "The mass paper only presents its results basing itself at the same time on the immediate experience of the masses themselves".

In other words he is all in favour of appreciating the subjectivity of the masses, indeed considers it essential, but he is in favour of appreciating it scientifically, in a Marxist way, not on the basis of superficial, partial, personal impressions subject themselves to pressures from more backward layers.

The points that Trotsky makes are quite indispensable. On occasion we are committing the errors he speaks of. We must righten our course immediately. Relate to the rising and advanced layers of the class, 'yes' but relate our subjectivity, that is our consciousness embodied in our programme to them. Without this we may as well quit.

Andrew Hornung

#### WORKING IN THE WOMEN'S LIBERATION MOVEMENT - an observation. (concluded at end of student report)

In IB no.5 Martin Thomas discerned three distinct (though obviously interconnected) elements of the struggle of revolutionaries against the oppression of women in all its aspects, for the "liberation of women... and the liberation of men". I shall list them as they appeared:

a) the explanation in suitable agitation and propaganda of the reactionary nature of the family institution and the fact and ideology of women's subordination.

b) The mobilisation of women for political action on any one of a variety of issues.

c) Working in existing WL groups

(A) is in my view a question of principle; (b) and (c) for a group of our size (though not for a group the size of IS eg.) are questions of tactics and priorities."

This short observation is designed to make this last point clearer - to make clearer what sort of difficulties are involved in (b) and (c). I ought to say that the information is all on hearsay, not long patient study.

The night cleaners campaign has just registered a signal victory. Any one who says - and I have heard it said - that the campaign is or was a waste of time I conclude must simply be ignorant of the facts. Still, as a very small organisation we would not under normal circumstances work within a very backward milieu, that on the whole is the field of the mass party (unless you are in the IMG of course). The reason will be obvious. The more backward the harder to recruit on the basis of a revolutionary programme.

IS, it seems, recruited May Hobbs, the leader of the night cleaners. But clearly they did not recruit her to IS politics but on the "Home for militants" ticket. But as a home for militants the Communist party is much better. And so May Hobbs was lost to IS and gained by the CP.

Much of the work the WAG did seems to have been things like collecting subs, helping with unionisation etc. This was good work, and has paid off. But again the backwardness of the section determined



## STUDENT FRACTION REPORT.

Due to the poor response to my circular I have not been able to fully locate all the student members of W.F. but the following is a list of places where it is rumoured we have students.

Birmingham Polytechnic - Roger Litawski (Social Studies)  
Birmingham University - Phil Lewis (Economics)  
Bolton Institute of Technology - John Cunningham (Psychology)  
  - Chris Corcoran (Business Studies)  
Bristol University - Simon Temple - (Economic History)  
Enfield College - Bas Hardy (Social Science)  
Keele University - Pat Longman (Sociology and Politics)  
Liverpool University - Paul Barker (Mathematics)  
Manchester University - Neal Smith (PhD on industrial working conditions)  
  - Naomi Wimbourne (Philosophy/ English)  
Nottingham Art College - Sue Leigh.

### W.F. Position on Students.

Our position on students, agreed by the NC, is summed up in the following extract from a draft of MT's article on the IMG.

In, let us say, the 19th century, the cultural and social ties between students and their class of origin were so tight that students had to be assessed politically as a special fraction of the bourgeoisie. Today, however, students generally have a degree of financial independence, and their destinies are uncertain and probably among the ranks of wage labour and even trade unionism. We have to consider students as a group with political independence from the bourgeoisie. But neither are students working class. They do not live by selling their labour power, they do not produce surplus value.

We regard students as being outside production, as not engaged in productive labour. From the point of view of economics, what is happening in universities and colleges is that a certain amount of socially necessary labour is being put in by lecturers, ancillary staff and so on, a certain amount of capital is being depreciated, and what is being produced is an enrichment of the labour power of the students. It's true that students work, and that their work is essential to the production of that enrichment. But the class position of students is essentially no different from what it would be if made transparent by students (or someone on their behalf) paying for their education ( - a situation, anyway, that in fact exists on a large scale in many advanced capitalist countries). The commodity produced remains in the possession of the student. Grants no more make students wage workers than unemployment benefit makes unemployed workers employed.

So we assess students as "declassed". The term "declassed" is a residual category, encompassing a variegated collection of marginal social groups. However, there are some conclusions we can draw already. Socialists do not have to confine themselves to picking off individual students - a student movement is not a reactionary force, as it would be if students are bourgeois. On the other hand, a socialist movement attempting to base itself primarily on students is building a house on sand, and will tend to degenerate into academicism or adventurism.

There is no necessary, built-in class struggle of independent, epochal, historical significance in the student situation. However, students are organised together in large number by their work. And they have a limited possibility of wringing concessions out of college administrations without the struggle necessarily reaching the level of a confrontation with the State.

Finally, students, though (except for a small minority) not engaged in producing ideas, have, as a result of their work, a certain sensitivity to ideological issues. Moreover they are closer to an international, not purely parochial consciousness. Struggles can be waged. What will be the nature of the politics of these struggles?

Political life does not take place through the direct action of social classes. The classes act through various forms of political representation - parties, non-party political movements (eg VSC), trade unions, state apparatuses, etc. These forms are not straightforward 'reflections' of the classes they represent - each party, etc. has its own independent history, into which its social base enters only as one element. With working class political parties a

## Students/2.

definite law of inertia operates. The British Communist Party, for example, continues to play an important role even though politically utterly bankrupt. Where a revolutionary leadership could develop the self-reliance and assertiveness of the working class, the reformist leadership acts as an indirect mechanism for the pressure of the capitalist class, and builds up an interaction where bureaucracy, prevarication, elitism, half-measures on the part of the leadership sustain and are sustained by apathy, short-sightedness, servility, backwardness among the rank and file. Having built this up, the reformist leadership fulfills a certain function which can't just be wished away. The CP's attitude to the Industrial Relations Bill was utterly demagogic and non-combative. But still, in terms of organised action against the Industrial Relations Bill, the CP could point to greater achievements than IS, the IMG, and the SLL put together.

It is this fact of being rooted in a definite routine of class struggle that gives rise to the law of inertia. Now, as regards students, there are no definite routines of class struggle, no definite functions of the reformist leaderships. There is therefore an extreme mobility of forms of political representation of various sections of students. Moreover, having no independent class position, students are naturally dependent for their ideologies upon the main social classes. In the era when the bourgeoisie was the rising class, they tended to follow the bourgeoisie; in the present era, when the proletariat is the rising class, they tend to follow the proletariat. (We speak, of course, only of general tendencies).

The present student militancy dates specifically from three developments; an upsurge in struggle against imperialism (Algeria, Cuba, Vietnam, the black nationalist movement in the US); a crisis of reformism (1964-70 Labour Government, 'Grand Coalition' in Germany, etc); a decline in the basis in reality of the ideology of the 'career' (increasing mobility and insecurity in graduate unemployment). The ideologies of reformism were unable to accommodate the challenge posed by the anti-imperialist struggles; the decline in the 'career' ideology opened the way for more cohesion in the student body.

The student movement, naturally, was fertile soil for all sorts of weird ideological mutations. Students are not, like the working class, "disciplined, united, organised by the mechanism of the process of capitalist production itself".

What then are the politics of the student struggle? Some general rules apply. Precisely because there is no built-in routine of class struggle, students tend to pose demands which their struggles cannot realise. Consequently there are tendencies to utopianism and ultra-leftism of various sorts. Beyond that, everything depends on the transformation of the political forms of representation through ideological struggle, on forming a solid socialist core which fights for ideological influence among students.

Obviously Marxists cannot adopt a sectarian attitude to student struggles, or postulate political education taking place in complete isolation from these struggles. But we must stress that 'student economism', 'confrontation politics', and other adventurism merely leads, and has led, to defeat, even at its own chosen level of the struggle against the college administrations.

Apart from the dubious and non-Marxist statement about "when the proletariat is the rising class students will tend to follow the proletariat" and an implied conservatism towards student struggles, the above statement seems adequate.

### Students and Branch Work.

From the few reports received it appears that the attitude of most branches is that students do student work at college and branch work when not at college, instead of seeing student work as being part of activities of the branch. It would be absurd if student members did not discuss industrial work but there is apparently little supervision or discussion of student work by most branches. Before next term all branches should discuss the activities that student members will be engaged in. Reports to be sent to the student convenor.

## Students/ 3

### Socialist Societies.

Our main area of student work will probably be in the Socialist Societies. W.F. comrades should actively take part in Soc. Soc. activities to win a number of students over to socialist politics through meetings, propaganda on such questions as Ireland, and by trying to link up student and worker struggles. Examples of this are linking up the Student Union autonomy issue with the I.R. Act and also the involvement of students in the miners' strike. Where possible local militants should be brought along to address student meetings.

The best people in Soc. Soc. will probably be attracted to the larger groups (IS, CP, IMG). Those that seriously want to help in workers' struggles will be attracted to the groups that have the impressive organisation, weekly paper etc. We have no hope of winning people on this level. We have to win people on the basis of our politics. Student comrades should organise Soc. Soc. discussion meetings in which we can differentiate ourselves from the other tendencies and try to organise meetings with W.F. speakers.

Comrades should actively take part in all 'local' student struggles, but care must be taken in initiating such struggles that you are not leading people to inevitable defeat and victimisation.

### Academic Work and Theoretical Work.

There seems to be a general consensus of opinion on the left, particularly in W.F., that the less academic work a student does and the more likely he is to be thrown out of college, then the better the comrade is. This is stupid. Student members should keep sufficiently abreast of their subject and aware of controversies in their field to be able to argue for a Marxist position in seminars and classes, to produce criticisms of bourgeois ideas, to write education notes, and to write articles for the paper.

Students have the opportunity and facilities for both developing their own understanding of Marxism and also contributing to the theoretical development of the group. All students should set themselves, or be commissioned by the group to undertake, a project for W.F., supervised by the education and publications committee and the student convenor. This is not a burden but something comrades should enjoy doing as part of their own development and that of the group.

### A.S.T.M.S.

The NC decided some time ago that all student comrades should join ASTMS. By doing this students can take part in all the activities of trade union work except hold office. This could be a most important area of work and could form the basis for an ASTMS fraction.

### L.C.D.S.U.

The Liaison Committee for the Defence of Student Unions got off to a good start last year as the beginnings of a left-wing core of politically conscious students. Comrades should try to get their Soc. Soc.s and Student Unions to affiliate and to try and get elected as delegates to L.C.D.S.U. meetings. We must try to orientate L.C.D.S.U. to linking up student issues with workers' struggles without falling into IS's trap of demanding a full political programme which excludes left sympathisers and which tries to build a mini-revolutionary party in the student movement.

One of our urgent tasks is to formulate our ideas on L.C.D.S.U. coherently. Branch student organisers should send me their ideas on our activities in L.C.D.S.U. immediately to gether with the state of L.C.D.S.U. locally as requested some 6 weeks ago.

PHIL LEWIS (Student Fraction Convenor)

## WOMEN'S LIBERATION MOVEMENT ... CONTINUED ...

that the work done was not revolutionary work, was not work approached from a distinctly revolutionary not to say Trotskyist angle.

What I wish to point out then amounts to this: the backwardness of women in many occupations (itself clearly a result of capitalist oppression) means that the targets chosen for industrial work by WAG and other groupings will tend to be just the kind of work that the small propaganda group would not do in any case. This is a general limitation applying to (b) and (c). AH

