



## P O L I T I C A L   L E T T E R .

We need to:

(a) in all our bases:

try to get the highest level of solidarity possible with workers in struggle - focus it on miners as going through Phase III, with your particular section piling in from behind to get their gains.

Get meetings as large as possible and put resolutions (judge wording so as to be principled, but not yards removed from everyone's consciousness) for either solidarity action (money, help with pickets, demonstrations, meetings, blacking) or in addition strike action to be coordinated with miners, etc.

(b) in each locality:

through all possible bodies do the same. Calls for action in Trades Councils, District Committees, Councils of Action where they exist. We should not ultimately feel ourselves limited by these bodies, though. If necessary, go round them.

We must be realistic. We cannot influence the miners' strike as a whole. We cannot generate a mass solidarity movement. But we must aim to be active (but not mad scurrying around, doing other people's work, or confining ourselves to the lowest apolitical tasks like social security) and interventionist, i.e. always raising political points for discussion, and to widen scope of discussions (but not being, or being seen as, just talkers, or still worse bad talkers)

We should leaflet local workplaces where we have contacts (try for regular fortnightly bulletin). Especially, do regular leafletting of the places we have (or should have) covered with industrial bulletins. Concentrate. Don't try a mass, every factory, IS-type bulletin.

Hold WF public meetings. Get contacts to come and/or NUM contacts to speak (even if they don't have exactly our line; we can speak from the floor). Joint left meetings are not harmful unless they are substitutes for our meetings. Cover other left meetings where possible.

Seek to develop serious contacts with the NUM. Contacts from the 1972 strike must be re-visited with the paper, etc. Even if they are not very good politically themselves, they can serve as bridges to better militants. Further contacts can be made through solidarity work (e.g. by inviting miners to speak at TU meetings). At this stage, just going along to miners' clubs etc. with papers and so on and without clearly defined aims will do no good.

During all this time, it is vital that the centre gets regular reports on all aspects:

(a) first and foremost, stories for the paper (but this is often forgotten)

(b) reports to the National Secretary & to the Industrial Sub Committee secretary (Stephen Corbishley, 42 Beatrice Rd, N.4). We need information to discuss and decide what we can do.

- report what you do & with what results

- send cuttings from local newspapers, and leaflets issued by unions, political tendencies, etc.

- news from contacts and from all important meetings. After any meeting: find exactly what the decision was, what were the arguments for and against, who they came from, voting figures, and what does the decision mean.

- try to include all possible details of names, official positions, etc; but check accuracy. Militants do not object to repeating facts; they do object to misreporting.

Stephen Corbishley

## The Present Situation

Over the past two years Tory policy has been to go for expansion of the economy. Their strategy has revolved around encouraging investment by keeping wages down and at the same time keeping demand buoyant by cutting taxes.

Until recently the policy has had some success. Production has expanded to a certain extent and profit margins have risen to a much larger extent. But there were few signs that the government had solved the persistent problems of underinvestment in industry. The expansion of production was achieved mainly by the fuller utilisation of plant, stocks and labour.

But expansion, such as it was, was only brought at a price. Firstly demand for imported raw materials naturally increased and combined with the increased prices of these essential commodities the result was that visible trade balance went from a surplus of £20 million (monthly average last quarter of 1971) to a deficit of £183 (third quarter 1973). Secondly the pressure of wage restraint on the class inevitably built up and rigid controls could only be maintained by a massive defeat of the working class, on a scale that the Tories were not strong enough to impose.

It was against this background that they introduced phase 3. They hoped to avert any major losses in production by allowing the EU leaders room in which to negotiate and at the same time allow competitive, profitable sectors of capital to compete for labour, a shortage of which was one of the major constraints on the economy.

When phase 3 was introduced the papers openly talked about it as a gamble. It was a gamble on world commodity prices falling (something which was predicted by all the bourgeois observers) and a gamble on containing wage increases. The gamble has come to grief in a far shorter time than anyone could have expected.

World commodity prices, far from falling, have risen sharply. Oil, the most important commodity, has doubled in price since the Middle East war. Copper, second most important, has gone up by about 70%. Inevitably the trade gap has widened even further. However, a balance of payments deficit (even at the present yearly rate of £3000 million) is not of itself disastrous. As long as there is a liberal system of world trade then one country's trade deficit can be financed by those countries with a surplus extending credit. Thus the government, with the support of the industrialists, has refused to cut down on home demand in order to redress the trade deficit and rather went for expansion on the basis of credit, in the hope that increased production would enable them to redress the balance later.

But the world economic situation has been changed radically by the cut back in oil production. There is now no hope of getting the increased production for next year and moreover it is doubtful whether other countries would be prepared to give credit when their own economies are being hit.

In the perspectives document for the last aggregate PS argued that there would be a recession in 1974/75. It seems most probable that the oil crisis will spark off a general recession earlier than expected and indeed make it a good deal deeper. Japan and Germany have already said that there will be no growth in 1974 and possibly an overall decrease in the GNP. All the countries of Europe and Japan, which rely almost totally on Arab oil, will be running trade deficits. In such a situation the government cannot allow the present trade gap to continue and they will certainly have to take deflationary measures, such as tax increases and possibly restrictions on imports (although EEC rules prevent any unilateral restrictions on imports from the Common Market).

If other countries were to take similar deflationary measures then there is a real chance of the recession turning into a slump. But this is doubtful. If the oil crisis looks like causing a world wide slump then US would undoubtedly intervene in one form or another. The major oil producers such as Saudi Arabia and the states around the Persian Gulf rely heavily on Western military security for their own existence and already several bourgeois commentators have tentatively suggested

military intervention. A world slump would also hit Russia, who would no doubt bring pressure to bear on the other Arab states.

The other failure of phase 3 is that it has failed to prevent the miners going for the full claim, although as the last paper stated it was specifically tailored for the miners. But even if there was no miners strike or overtime ban, phase 3 has had the ground pulled from underneath it. The flexibility of phase 3 was based on a flexible economic situation, which no longer exists. For the capitalist class phase 3 is now far too flexible. But for the working class higher wage increases will be needed to offset the increased rate of inflation, which will result from production cut-backs.

In such a situation we have to put forward demands which are essentially defensive and at the same time put forward demands which pose a working class solution to the crisis and are in that sense offensive.

In the first category the demand for "Work or full pay" is obvious. But we should also be aware that the employers will use the crisis to isolate and sack militants - we should work out defensive measures against such moves. Also we can no longer rule out the use of the Industrial Relations Act - particularly the imposition of a ballot if the government thinks that the miners are weakening.

On the second point I don't think we should play down the nature of the crisis. No doubt some of the measures taken are intended to shake the nerves of the miners' leaders. But even without a miners overtime ban there still would be a completely changed situation because of the oil shortage. Rather we should put forward the nationalisation of the oil companies and the seizure of oil stocks by the government.

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THE GENERAL SITUATION IN  
WOMEN'S LIB.

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The present situation in the Women's Lib movement is one of great confusion. This situation has existed all along the line due to the movement's inability to clearly define its aims from the start and its refusal to draw up a manifesto of any kind. The original four demands of equal pay, equal education opportunities, 24-hour nurseries, and free contraception and abortion, coined by the original few groups who participated in the first National Women's Lib Conference at Oxford in February 1970, are no longer sufficient in themselves and need to be incorporated into a programme based on a broader perspective.

What is stopping the production of any sort of manifesto is the idealistic set-up of the movement, which refuses to entertain the idea of any structured organisation. It has been upheld that any form of structural organisation would lead to authoritarian hierarchies within the movement, which in turn would prove a parody of the capitalist structure of society today: so a liberal-minded policy of democracy has been maintained, meaning that all decisions are decided upon at conference by the use of the majority vote. However, the movement has not succeeded with these methods - in fact it has been left floundering with them. The lack of organisation has led to a down fall in communication between groups up and down the country, and consequently to the loss of unified power necessary to political activity. The situation regarding organisation within the movement is at last being questioned, namely due to the production of a pamphlet called 'The Tyranny of Structurelessness'. It is useful in that it describes the pitfalls of an organisation without a structured base, and it details all the symptoms of such an organisation, but it offers no concrete proposals for a change in the situation.

With no national organising body or headquarters the individual groups in the movement are left to their own devices, and can almost be seen as autonomous bodies making their own policies. Naturally depending on who the individual members of that group are, and what their political tendencies are, their actions likewise will be determined.

Let us turn now to the question of the various tendencies working within the Women's Lib. Movement. One of the first left groups to participate were the Maoists working in the then Women's Liberation Front; now the Union of Women for Liberation. The Maoists have failed to gain any credibility in the movement due to their inflexible dogmatism, their bible-thumping, and their inability to relate to a predominantly petit-bourgeois movement. Their calls for a proletarian women's movement, and their attitude towards the women who do make up the movement, have set up a wall of hostility; and one can correctly say that they are more or less on the outside of the movement now, with neither Women's Lib nor the Maoists themselves entertaining any idea of working together politically.

At the same time as the Maoists, the IMG women working in Socialist Woman groups entered into the movement, in fact they did much to establish the movement throughout Britain. As a tendency within the women's movement they have made quite a few gains, and carry quite a bit of weight. Quite a few women who have joined Women's Lib as apolitical beings, and who after a while has increased their level of awareness regarding the oppression of women, and of the working class, have turned to the IMG due to the influence of the Socialist Women. This is something we in Workers Fight must bear in mind. There are many women in the movement who reach a stage where to be in Women's Lib is not enough, and they start looking around at the established left organisations. However, we must not view Women's Lib solely as a fishing ground. We must put forward a programme in the movement to work for a revolutionary organisation. To gain members for Workers Fight must be seen as

The IMG is facing a problem which will face Workers Fight in our increased involvement in the Women's Lib movement,<sup>and</sup> with at is the problem of an organisation with its politics clearly defined (WF) working as a tendency within an ill-defined movement (WL).

The IS were slow to acknowledge women's lib and their members entered originally on an individual basis. Later, through their own pressure, they received official backing which initially entailed permission to engage in political activity with working class women. This attitude of "workerism" still exists among IS women in the movement as it does in IS as a whole. Let me quote from their pamphlet "Women Fight Back", by Kath Ennis:

"This middle class domination of women's liberation means that the movement, as it is, is incapable of linking its campaigns with the struggle for socialism. This in turn means that, in the long run, it cannot achieve its objective, the liberation of women".

This IS tradition of anti-middle-class and anti-intellectual participation in the struggle for socialism alienates them from the women's lib movement. True, when the revolution comes it will come from within the working class, but it will not exclude the socialist from a middle-class upbringing. One would agree with IS on the need for more involvement of working class women in the movement but this is not achieved by denigration of the sincere middle-class members of the movement.

At the beginning IS also grudgingly admitted that women weren't playing their full role in the organisation. I think it's worth mentioning here that this is something which still affects most women on the left, no doubt due to the conditioning we have received like all women in our society. It's up to us, in conjunction with the male comrades, to remedy this.

Since 1971, the IS women have been holding their own women-only conferences, and have been producing their own literature. Their publication Women's Voice is quite a fair paper in that it is easily readable for the women it's aimed at, without being condescending. Most of the articles are around industrial issues, which is the work the IS women mainly concentrate on.

The position of the Communist Party has been one of virtual non-participation, although the Women's Advisory Committee has discussed the 'women' question. They have tended to deal with the safer questions, such as equal pay and nurseries, avoiding the question of the family, although I now believe some of the women in the Party are becoming restless and calling for further attention to be drawn to the question. Their involvement in the past has extended to writing criticisms, and replies to various works that have come out of the movement.

I have discussed the external groups that have brought outside influence into the Women's Lib movement; now I shall talk a bit about the factions that have arisen within the movement itself.

In the late '60s the position of homosexuals and lesbians in society started to change. Although still considered as 'social deviants' it was becoming acceptable to discuss their problems. The Women's Lib movement provided a base for the gay women in which they were accepted at face value. Primarily the gay women have been interested in issues which have affected their personal lives, although that's not to say they've not entered into the broader political issues. They've tended to centre their ideas on the questions of the family, female sexuality, the rights of children, etc. In the last year the gay faction seem to have been presenting themselves as an alternative in the movement. The question of being gay in a 'straight' society has been discussed endlessly, and has culminated in many articles declaring that to be gay is what every oppressed woman should strive for, if she is to be truly emancipated! Unfortunately a large section of the gay women see this as being the solution to everything, which of course it is not. Whether you're gay or not, you're still oppressed by the capitalist system.

NEWS FROM THE BRANCHES.

LIVERPOOL. A new issue of the 'Hook' is being brought out jointly by L'pool and Manchester, and is to appear on a regular monthly basis in future. Work is being done in an Anti-Fascist Committee and the Chile Solidarity Campaign, also in NALGO Action. There is one new member, JRy, a student.

BOLTON. The Council of Action is to hold a public meeting on the miners' claim on January 17th, with a local NUM speaker if possible.

MANCHESTER. Cde. NW has been very active in speaking at meetings to socialists and Arab students on the question of the Middle East war, and has gained considerable credibility, particularly from a public attack on her by the local Jewish paper. We are hoping to organise a number of meetings with WE in OTHER universities via Arab students' organisations. All branches should also if possible take initiatives themselves in organising meetings.

TEESSIDE. A women's liberation group has been started round WF after a recent meeting at which cde. SA from Bolton spoke. PS is on leave of absence on account of illness.

NOTTINGHAM. Because of Teesside being weakened by PS's illness, responsibility for RSN is being shifted from Teesside to Nott'm.

Contact is being made with NUM militants in Ollerton and (via Labour Party) in East Nottingham.

BIRMINGHAM. Cde. JB (ex-Teesside WF) is now in Birmingham.

COVENTRY. Work has continued round Triumph Meriden, including EH speaking at a mass picket, and DS organising a meeting at Leicester University for the TM workers. A new Machine Tools bulletin has been produced.

NORTHAMPTON. KB has gained shop stewards' credentials and delegacy to the local LP from his AUEW branch.

READING. We have lost HP, who is going home to Germany.

LONDON. Pretty nearly all WF members in London are now in the LP/LPYS. A drive has been launched to sell 1000 papers per issue in London.

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WOMEN'S LIBERATION... continued...

Many of the gay women, however, see the true nature of oppression and participate in various left activities both in the Women's Lib movement and in other organisations.

Another faction in the movement has emerged, that of the Radical Feminists. They view the subjugation of women not just in terms of economic oppression, but place great emphasis on the psychological and biological oppression too. A minority follow their conclusions through to the extent of discarding all possible connection with men. Unfortunately, this faction appears to be gaining a hold in the movement at present. Reports from the National Conference in Bristol in July mention that, apart from the conference being totally disorganised there were frequent outbursts of anti-male propaganda which were met with large shares of applause. Indeed this last national conference seems to be a very disheartening landmark in the movement's history.

Women must realise that while it is very necessary for a separate women's movement in order to combat women's specific oppression, it does not mean we should not join with other groups, male and female, in order to achieve common goals, those of fighting to abolish the capitalist system, which oppresses both men and women, and the setting up of a socialist state.

VIVIENNE NICHOLLS.

ON OPPOSITION IN THE SOVIET UNION

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(REPLY TO MT: SEE IB 16)

On the strict point of theory Cde Thomas is right to criticise the term democratic communism as nonsensical. What the author had in mind of course was that the Soviet Union's post capitalist society cleansed of bureaucratic tyranny and under a regime of workers' democracy would have a great positive attraction for the world's working class and thereby would pose a threat to capitalism. The word was used loosely, colloquially, to mean the opposite of tyranny, the absence of that suppression of all liberty which is characteristic of the Soviet Union today as for many decades past.

For Marxists however words like democracy have distinct meanings, as does its colloquial opposite dictatorship. Dictatorship - the dictatorship of the proletariat - does not mean the complete absence of liberty as in Russia today. It merely means the rule of a given class - with a wide range of political forms of that rule, ranging from fullest freedom, at least for the ruling class, to strict dictatorship as that word is popularly understood. Marxists believe that Britain today is a bourgeois dictatorship, albeit one in which the real social rule of the capitalists is carried out through democratic forms, and even with the active or passive consent of the majority of the people. When we call for the Dictatorship of the Proletariat we understand that as the substitution of the rule of the working class for that of the bourgeoisie. That rule also can take various forms including the exercise of merciless repression against the present ruling class and its supporters.

It is also true as Martin Thomas implies that no revolutionary communist newspaper should babble about abstract democracy and pander to 'democratic' prejudices. We must expose the sham of bourgeois democracy, the fact that it was based on the oppression of the colonies. We must point to both its real class pedigree and its instability until the hard won democratic rights now enjoyed by the working class are soundly based on real working class power - that is until they are part of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

So much for the strict points of theory. For the second point we must part company with Cde Thomas, in so far as the general point is meant as a criticism of WF. On the question of spreading illusions in democracy we have a right to ask that the few lines he criticises be taken in context - of that issue of the paper and the fact that it was the paper's 33rd issue. The very same issue dealt at length with the fruits of democratic illusions in Chile. Issue after issue of WF has preached disobedience to the Industrial Relations Act and the NIRC. We openly advocate that pickets should organise to defend themselves against the police. We support the war of the Irish republicans against the state we live in. And so on. These things are the barest minimum demanded of communists - but they do not add up to having or spreading illusions in democracy. It would be ten times easier to sustain a charge of ultra leftism against the paper than one of spreading illusions in bourgeois democracy. Ten times.

But when all the qualifications about the limits of democracy, its class nature in Britain today, are made, it must also be said that a Marxist policy is not just one of disparagement of democracy. We are for the most tenacious defence of every democratic victory which the British working class has won - despite knowing that those victories were possible only because of the privileged position of Britain in the world. We are for the fullest extension of democratic rights, here and now, even within the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie. In Britain the democratic sentiments of the working class are separable from the illusions in bourgeois democratic institutions, and in the neutrality of the bourgeois state. Those sentiments, purged of confusion, and given a scientific class consciousness, will be a precious part of a mass fighting socialist consciousness in the British working class. Even those illusions in specifically bourgeois democracy which have been and are a main



prop of the capitalist class's rule in Britain can turn into their opposite when the bourgeoisie itself is forced, as it is being forced in Britain today, to begin to abrogate some of those rights. This is true even in the USA, as Nixon's predicament shows. 'Democracy' may indeed be a final rallying cry for reactionaries going down before the proletarian revolution - it certainly was in Russia. But before that in the countries where real democratic liberties were won by the working class the defence of democracy is very likely to be a weapon against the ruling class before ever it will be a banner for reaction.

Posed as a pure abstraction, as MT poses it, to criticise stalinism as undemocratic, to see its differences with Trotskyism as one of abstract a-historical, classless democracy would indeed be stupid. Cde Thomas is responsible for the abstract posing of it, not the original article. The article placed it in the context of the social rule of the bureaucracy, against the implicit background of 50 years of unrestrained bureaucratic tyranny. It is this actual background which must qualify the general theoretical positions put forward from 'the books' by MT. Why does the bureaucracy orientate towards agreement with anti-working-class forces in the world arena? Because it fears the working class at home, knowing that revolution abroad threatens echoes at home. How do they repress the working class? Through total suppression of workers democracy, substituting bureaucratic arbitrariness: the incompatibility of the rule of the bureaucracy with any sort of workers' democracy is the proof of its instability and an essential part of the Trotskyist analysis of the bureaucracy as a usurpatory caste, not a historically legitimate ruling class. The features of stalinism itemised by Cde MT are not at all separable from its anti-democratic character: they are the extension and expression of the social relation between workers and bureaucrats whose clearest encapsulation and expression is the lack of internal democracy. Even if the difference between stalinism and Trotskyism were to be posed purely in terms of democracy, however inadequate such a posing would be, it would only be 'senseless moralising' if it could be shown concretely that the curtailment was necessary to defend working class interests, and if the bureaucracy were in some way defending those interests.

Yes indeed we reject any "assessment of the Soviet Union by an abstract classless norm of democracy divorced from material conditions". But it is democracy assessed in the light of the class interests of the proletariat, the actual role of the bureaucracy, and the actual material conditions and possibilities in the Soviet Union that we are concerned with - and it is in the light of all these things that democracy is possible in the Soviet Union, and necessary. It is Cde T, resting on quotations, who is ignoring the concrete conditions. And it is when we take his generalities and apply them to the Soviet Union that his implications fall down.

While democracy is closely linked up with prejudices and delusions about some allegedly neutral state, the condemnation of the USSR as 'undemocratic' is not necessarily of that sort. Nor is it simply reducible to the undoubted fact that democracy is a form of state. Democratic forms of self-administration will always be necessary, even after the state has withered away.

There is a good reason for suspicion after 4 to 5 decades of unbridled bureaucratic dictatorship trampling on every proletarian right, and on every human right. Trotsky's comments on democratic communism were written against Boris Souvarine forty years ago. These comments still bear all the marks of the post-revolutionary polemics where Lenin and Trotsky (see 'Terrorism and Communism' and 'The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky') faced sham socialists who took their stand on the sacredness of an abstract supra-class democracy against the proletarian revolution in general and its Russian embodiment in particular. They denied the right of the revolution to defend itself, to impose an iron dictatorship against the former ruling classes. Souvarine was joining hands with such people, with his stress on an abstract democracy. At the same time, Trotsky himself believed at that time only in a limited lifting of the bans on political activity, believing the survival of

The first part of the document discusses the importance of maintaining accurate records of all transactions. It emphasizes that proper record-keeping is essential for the integrity of the financial system and for the ability to detect and prevent fraud. The text also mentions the need for regular audits and the role of independent auditors in ensuring the reliability of financial statements.

In addition, the document highlights the significance of transparency and accountability in financial reporting. It states that stakeholders, including investors and the public, have a right to know how their money is being managed. This requires the implementation of robust internal controls and the adoption of international best practices for financial reporting. The text also touches upon the importance of ethical conduct and the role of professional associations in promoting high standards of behavior.

The document further explores the challenges faced by financial institutions in the digital age. It notes that the rapid pace of technological change has led to the emergence of new risks, such as cyber threats and data privacy concerns. To address these challenges, institutions must invest in advanced security measures and ensure that their systems are resilient to various types of attacks. Moreover, the text discusses the need for regulatory frameworks that can keep pace with the evolving landscape of financial services, ensuring that innovation is encouraged while risks are effectively managed.

Finally, the document concludes by emphasizing the role of leadership in driving positive change. It argues that strong leadership is essential for the successful implementation of any strategy, particularly in the financial sector where the stakes are high. Leaders must be committed to the highest standards of integrity and ethical conduct, and they must foster a culture of transparency and accountability throughout the organization. The text also mentions the importance of ongoing education and training for all employees to ensure they are equipped with the skills and knowledge needed to thrive in a dynamic and competitive environment.

The document also includes a section on the importance of stakeholder engagement. It states that financial institutions should actively seek to understand the needs and expectations of their various stakeholders, including customers, employees, regulators, and the community. This engagement is crucial for building trust and ensuring that the institution's operations are aligned with the interests of all parties involved. The text also discusses the role of communication in this process, highlighting the need for clear, consistent, and timely information to be shared with stakeholders. Finally, the document mentions the importance of monitoring and evaluating the impact of the institution's activities on society and the environment, and the need to take appropriate action to address any negative impacts.

the revolution demanded this. He still, while attacking the bureaucratic outrages and the bureaucracy itself as a social force, held that heavily intertwined with the rule of the bureaucracy was an element of necessary repression against reaction, carried out in its own way by the bureaucracy. Not too long before his exchanges with Souvarine, Trotsky in fact gave credence to the 1931 Menshevik trial involving Sukhanov, now known to have been a frame-up - and he should have known better. MT's quote is from the essay in which Trotsky first came out for a political revolution in the USSR and for a plurality of Soviet parties.

Right up to his death Trotsky continued to believe that the bureaucracy was tied to state enterprise. Through its bungling, etc, it was undermining the remains of the October revolution, yet might be forced to react against the product of its own bungling, as at the end of the 1920s, and take the stage as the defender - in its own way - of the remnants of the Revolution. In this emergency Trotskyists would critically support the actions of the bureaucracy, despite the bureaucratic and arbitrary elements, etc. But only in the last analysis.

Yes we are for civil rights in general in the Soviet Union and the other workers states, including civil rights even for opponents of socialism. If in the final analysis, if the social regime was threatened, we would support even an arbitrary and bureaucratic 'defence of the revolution', that is only in the final analysis, too. Normally we condemn the lack of the rule of law, including the rule of civil liberties: by definition these are impartial. A situation of draconic revolutionary exclusion from the franchise in the early stage of the revolution was a temporary and necessary measure in a backward country where the working class was heavily outnumbered socially: it was part of a holding operation. Only the working class itself democratically organised and enjoying political liberty can exercise such a dictatorship. In reality for decades the whole thrust has been against the working class, as Cde T himself points out - against the left. In reality also what is the situation in the USSR. There is an advanced country with a cultured working class. Which of the draconian measures seen by the Bolshevik leaders, and partly by Trotsky in the thirties, would today be genuinely necessary in the Soviet Union to defend workers power? None. Not one. Any resemblance between harsh bureaucratic draconianism and that of the early years is an optical illusion, one very useful to the bureaucracy. We at least should not give it credence. We must remember that the harsh measures of the early years were rooted in particular conditions, conditions murderously unfavourable to socialism and a healthy workers state, conditions of class balance and backwardness which are not at all in existence in Russia today. In any case it is childish to assume that they were the result of a desire to give a display of r.. r.. revolutionary ferocity by the Bolsheviks !

Vigorous working class action; whatever draconian measures are necessary for working class victory and the consolidation of victory; subordination of all abstract norms of abstract democracy to the class interest of the proletariat in the revolution: this is the teaching of Bolshevism on revolution and democracy. But while draconian measures may be necessary and to shy away from what is necessary to the working class revolution is treason, it will be far better to have as little draconian measures as possible, as little upsets as possible. Lenin pointed out that the making of the revolution was relatively easy in Russia, and it was the aftermath, with civil war and famine amidst backwardness, that was the difficulty; In the advanced countries the opposite: it would be defeating the ruling class that would be the difficulty and afterwards things would be much easier than in Russia. Russia today resembles such conditions more than it resembles its old dead revolutionary self of 50 years ago. Draconian measures would be probably a minimum, even in the suppression of the bureaucracy in a political revolution. Central to the conception in Cde Thomas's thesis is a sort of mental image of revolutionary rule as a permanent mob rule, a permanent storming of Bastilles, a regime of the Committee of Public Safety

the working class and its allies in a revolution than the miserable doling out of a 'justice' tailored by and to the needs of our bourgeois class enemies. Better still the rule of working class law in a society where that class has sufficient weight to rule democratically, within the rule of law, which is its own class law but applied impartially. Better than a draconian and insecure dictatorship in the narrower sense is a stable workers' regime which does not need to suppress the speech even of its enemies, and which allows itself if not more at least not less than bourgeois democracy has attained. "Rule of Law" ? Yes, cde Thomas. Working class law, administered by workers' courts. If we apply any rigorous examination to the cde's exposition we will see that it actually lacks any conception of the transitional stage of the workers state between revolutionary consolidation, in a healthy workers state, and the qualitative dissolution of the state in society: except for an image of draconian/revolutionary dictatorship which may be necessary even in the advanced countries in the revolution and immediately after it, but hardly for the whole of the early transition period. That will be a period regulated by its own laws. In Russia today a stable regime of workers' democracy, democracy of by and for the working class, would not need to repress even vociferous anti-socialists, to deprive them of their civil rights: in the bureaucracy's measures here there is not even that vestige of revolutionary significance which some of its actions may have had in the thirties. Cde Thomas, ignoring the concrete, of 50 years ago and now, is guilty of romantic revolutionary posturing. It is here that his extrapolations from his interesting quotations fall down. Valid or not in themselves, and for their own time and place, their implications when measured against present Russian conditions and possibilities, are nonsense. We advocate a political revolution, and that implies, according to our tradition, that we should not even shrink from depriving the bureaucracy of civil rights and so on, as did Trotsky in the thirties when he raised the slogan "Drive the bureaucracy out of the Soviets" and in the process alarmed certain democracy fetishists. Here too the test is the concrete one. Trotsky's slogan was motivated by a conception of a society still backward, producing and reproducing bureaucracy out of the backwardness so that it was necessary to devise means of controlling and fighting bureaucracy and to envisage the continued existence of this struggle even after a successful political revolution had broken the power of the bureaucracy's political dictatorship. Are these now the conditions? The level of culture is now such that this circular reproduction of bureaucracy is unlikely, the control of functionaries by the organised working class would probably not necessitate draconian measures. We don't know how much such measures will be required in the Soviet Union (the other states are necessarily to be considered separately and concretely) or for how long after the political reconquest of direct power by the working class. We don't know exactly - but we won't learn to know through dogmatic extrapolation from the texts and polemics of 40 years ago.

Finally cde Thomas should beware of lining up with stalinist slanderers, of endorsing charges against opponents of the bureaucracy whose words are twisted and are not allowed to speak openly and freely, to freely form judgments, and who are sometimes driven to extreme positions (see P. Mendeyef's criticisms of the 'rightists' in the Guardian 8-11-73). He should also beware of the implications of what he says. Dogmatic posturing such as his could logically lead to supporting the suppression of the Hungarian Revolution (where all sorts of reactionary forces - and even fascist forces - were let loose) and even the invasion of Czechoslovakia.

SEAN MATGAMNA  
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Report to Steering Committee on Lutte Ouvriere International Conference.

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This conference was held in France. Groups attending were: Lutte Ouvriere and its satellite groups, Combat Ouvrier (Antilles), Spark (USA), and UATCI (Africa); IS (Britain) and the SWM (Ireland); IS(USA) and an Australian satellite, SWAG; RSL (USA), a recent split from IS (USA); Accion Comunista (Spain); two Italian groups and a Danish ultra-left group.

Proceedings. There were four topics selected for the conference by L.O. - the international monetary crisis; internal opposition in the USSR; Popular Frontism in Latin America; the Middle East war; and building the revolutionary party.

I was present only for the discussion on opposition in the USSR. The basic idea of the document presented by L.O. was that it is wrong to call the Soviet oppositionists 'communists' or 'socialists'; some of them (e.g. Sakharov) just represent liberalising tendencies in the bureaucracy, and though others (e.g. Yakir, Grigorenko) don't, they are no more than radical democrats.

I made the following comments: their analysis of destalinisation (seeing it exclusively as the expression of liberalising tendencies in the bureaucracy) was one-sided; one also had to consider the effects of the creation of the deformed workers' states and the consequent breakup of Stalinist monolithism; and destalinisation was to an extent a reaction to mass discontent or the fear of such mass discontent; it was not enough for L.O. to say that Yakir, Grigorenko etc don't represent privileged strata; either they represent (in a confused way, certainly) the discontent of the working masses, or they are 'disembodied ideas'; to say that Yakir, Grigorenko etc. are not fully developed scientific communists is true, but it rather misses the point that we are here concerned with a fully-developed institutionalised political grouping that can lead or mislead the Russian workers, but rather with an assortment of individuals trying to come to grips with events in extremely difficult conditions (repression, lack of access to basic information, etc); "in the twilight all cats are grey"; we must lift the twilight through revolutionary action, and we should push and publicise the positions of the Soviet oppositionists to promote that revolutionary action through furthering the breakup of Stalinism.

Everyone else who spoke agreed with L.O.'s ideas on the opposition - or rather they said they agreed, but in fact they repeated the ideas in a crass, crude way, ignoring a number of qualifications which L.O. had been careful to make. IS (USA) said that all the oppositionists either represented the interests of capitalism or the interests of the bureaucracy. RSL (USA) replied to my point about the "twilight" by saying that we should lift the "twilight" by... relentless criticism of the oppositionists (a new way to fight totalitarianism - relentless criticism of all who oppose that totalitarianism!). And they even spoke of "breaking the Russian working class from these democratic leaders"...

The bulk of the debate was a set-piece disputation on the class nature of the USSR - state capitalist (IS Britain, RSL-USA), bureaucratic collectivist (IS-USA, SWAG), or degenerated workers' state (LO)

In reply to my contribution, LO made the following points: that destalinisation started before any mass movement; that Grigorenko and Yakir need not represent any definite social forces any more than Posadas does (as an IS(Britain) delegate in fact remarked, this is a silly argument because Posadas represents no social forces precisely because he is a pathological phenomenon, whereas Yakir etc are not lunatics and represent a relatively widespread current); that the "twilight" will be lifted only by the workers' movement, and some of the present democratic oppositionists may then side against the workers, therefore we must criticise them now (this is not really correct - Plekanov eventually sided against the workers, but did that negate his role as founder of the Russian Marxist movement).

On the other items of the agenda I only heard LO's introductions.

Comrades can read these in 'Class Struggle'.

On the Middle Eastern war, I left a statement of our position to be read out to the conference. IS (Britain) has the same position as us. IO has the same position as the IMG. IS (USA) take a position of defeatism-on-both-sides in the war and self-determination for the 'Israeli Jewish nation'. RSL (USA) oppose self-determination for the 'Israeli Jewish nation', but took a position of defeatism-on-both-sides in the war (because of the bad war aims of the Arab governments).

Comments. "In its own way it is a negative demonstration that the solution to the problems of the movement in the late '40s did not lie with the new class groups" ("41 Theses", no. 17)

If the USFI is bad, this "state-capitalist international" is ten times worse. Its basis is ideological laissez-faire, "with a wide range of scope for purely subjective emphasis, conclusions, options" ("41 Theses", no.17), sanctified by periodical set-piece disputations.

IO and its satellites seem to be the healthiest groups there. How open they are to discussion is another question. Their position on the degenerated and deformed workers' states is ludicrous theoretically, but quite stable and necessary for them psychologically (they cannot call Russia state capitalist for fear of disagreeing with Trotsky and introducing all sorts of unforeseeable perturbations into their theory; they cannot recognise the deformed workers' states without perturbing their workerist fundamentalism). We should in any case press ahead with the projected polemic against them on degenerated and deformed workers' states, recommissioning it if necessary. Such a polemic would probably be much more useful than attendance at these conferences (also cheaper).

The RSL (USA) has a state-capitalist (what sort of state-capitalist I don't know) majority, but a workers-statist minority. The politics of the group are an extreme rationalistic sectarianism. They seem to be very much on the same wavelength as the 'Spartacists', and it would not surprise me if 'Spartacist' eats a good many of them up. On the other hand, some of the sectarianism may be over-reaction against the Schachtmanite IS(USA) majority, and they seem to be seriously committed to work in the working class, which should knock some of the edges off their rationalism fairly quickly. There are probably useful elements in the group to be gained, but I don't see how we can get access to them.

MT. 14 Nov 73.



become skilled specialists of the military art, able to hold posts as commanders.

Trotsky, Writings 1939/40 (May 1940)

### ON CONSCRIPTION

... We are absolutely in favour of compulsory military training and in the same way for conscription. Conscription? Yes. By the bourgeois state? No. We cannot entrust this work, as any other, to the state of the exploiters... I would prefer to say "Once conscription is made into law we, without ceasing to struggle against the capitalist state, concentrate our struggle for military training (under workers' control)\*\* and so on."

We can't oppose compulsory military training by the bourgeois state just as we can't oppose compulsory education by the bourgeois state. Military training in our eyes is a part of education. We must struggle against the bourgeois state; its abuses in this field as in others.

Trotsky, Writings 1939/40 (July 1940)

(\*\* I have inserted the words 'under workers control' myself; it is clear from the context (p. 117) that it is Trotsky's meaning).

### III

#### TO RENOUNCE WORK IN THE ARMY IS TO RENOUNCE REVOLUTION !

In the present stage of the mobilisation, the high school students realise the need to situate the struggle against the Debre law\*\* in the framework of an overall, long-term antimilitarist campaign. The Debre law is only one thread in the skein of bourgeois militarism.

We have seen the most confused and doubtful propaganda tagged on to the tremendous protests against the Debre law. Leave aside Ordre Nouveau\* who would not have hesitated to march shoulder to shoulder with the leftists (if they had been allowed to) under the pretext that the Debre law runs counter to the professional army favoured by those nostalgic for the Reichswehr<sup>++</sup>... But in the very midst of the movement, some have not hesitated to use, demagogically, a certain number of slogans which, so they reckon, have the 'spontaneous' support of the youth. Such is the case with Lutte Ouvriere, which puts forward the theme "down with obligatory military service". True, this slogan translates in a crude way the spontaneous protest of a section of youth against going to get kicked around for 12 months in a barracks. But this feeling is evidently that of the least conscious section of the movement. Above all, it is an extremely dangerous confusion. One cannot develop persistent propaganda against the conscript army, for an army of volunteers such as the one operating right now in Ulster, and also struggle effectively against the perspective of a professional army. But this struggle is, in all circumstances, an essential axis of the propaganda of revolutionaries. To renounce it is to renounce the education of the enlisted proletariat.

The struggle against bourgeois militarism is indivisible. No demand, even the most apparently modest, is regarded calmly by military Authority. Thus the least protest against martinetism, for example, infallibly sets a breeze of subversion blowing in the prison-like world of the barracks. On this account it is necessary to advance firmly all the slogans, even elementary ones, which put in question the intolerable living conditions in the barracks, the "sub-human" status of the conscripts:

\* ban any clauses on hiring (which require completion of military obligations before finding work)

\* suppression of martinetism, of humiliating regulations on haircut, real right to leave, right to information, to civilian dress outside the barracks, free transport, etc.

These slogans are closely linked to those which contest forced enlistment:

\* right to postponement for all young people.

\* right for regular soldiers to annul their contracts at any time.

\* compulsory presence at the barracks only during the hours of service;

\*\* - Debre law: the law repealing postponement rights. \*-Ordre Nouveau: fascist grouping. ++ - Reichswehr - German army under Hitler.



and denouncing military repression:

- \* immediate liberation of all imprisoned soldiers.
- \* freedom for conscientious objectors
- \* suppression of Military Police organs
- \* suppression of military courts and prisons.

Finally, we are not pacifists. We do not intend to abandon the monopoly of arms to a bourgeoisie which is ready to use all means of force to secure its domination. Thus we fight for the right of all young people to a real military training:

- \* against the installation of a professional army
- \* if they give you a rifle, take it and learn to use it ! It could be useful later !
- \* right to military service for women
- \* length of military service reduced to the time of arms training. The youth wish to learn the use of arms. They protest against 'national' service of which the essential function is not to give them that training, but to brutalise them and teach them to toe the line.

Rouge.

#### IV

#### FIGHTING CONSCRIPTION..... BUT HOW ?

The excerpts by themselves dispose of the argument that we are "supporting bourgeois conscription". We oppose bourgeois conscription. We fight it. Of course... but how to fight it is the question.

The most serious argument for the LO line is the following. In the periods in which Lenin or Trotsky wrote, there were massive objective pressures for militarisation. In that situation, a 'no conscription' line was simply pissing against the wind: the important conflicts were the conflicts inside the army, and revolutionaries should direct their attention there. Today, there are no such massive objective pressures. The main conflicts are the conflicts against conscription.

But, is it true that the objective pressures for militarisation are so massively weakened today ? Of course, there isn't a world war or an immediate prospect of one right now... but a massive permanent militarisation is still characteristic of modern imperialism. ('Permanent Arms Economy' may be a wrong theory.. but it's a correct description !) Britain doesn't have conscription, true: but Britain has historically had an exceptionally small army (on account of being an island) and in fact fought a large part of world war I without conscription.

It is probably hypothetically possible for the French state to do without conscription... but only by attracting large numbers of professional recruits by propaganda, increased pay, etc. If we are strong enough to prevent the French bourgeois state from arming itself adequately, that effectively means that we are strong enough to overthrow it. We're not. Either the French state has conscription or it has a largely expanded professional army. We must oppose both alternatives. We do that by raising demands like those of Rouge, and also control by trade unions over military training and right to receive military training while still living at home.

Of course, the question of the best tactic to oppose both alternatives is a tactical question. Because it is a tactical question, it is not excluded in principle that we could participate in an anti-conscription movement like that of Britain in the 1950s - combining our participation with agitation against pacifism and for military training under the control of workers' organisations. If the bourgeois state considers dropping conscription, then it is not for us to defend conscription ! That would be the mirror-image error to LO's opportunism, when they take up "no conscription" in <sup>a</sup> moralistic way with only vague propaganda mutterings against the professional army.

A COMMENT ON A. H.'s DOCKER

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AH's docker (IB Supplement on the LP) seems to me to have an eminently rational attitude to political life - and not to be as confused as AH thinks.

AH raised the question of a General Strike - a General Strike for what? Presumably for a trade-unionist reform, in course of which militant struggle the workers will see the need for seizing power. The fact that the docker cheated and saw the question of power before the struggle took place should not surprise us. For power, as the docker saw, we need leaders, and who are our leaders? - the LP and TU leadership. The overall and urgent need is to raise workers' consciousness, to break them from reformism, to begin to build the alternative leadership. In this of course we stress workers' self-activity - in the course of the struggle they will learn and will throw up new leaders. Let us not kid ourselves, however, whenever any 'spontaneous' struggle arises, there is nearly always a reformist leadership there - how could it be otherwise? Often Labour councillors are convenors, Union officials are called in, Labour MPs soon lead marches and speak at mass meetings to tumultuous applause.

We start from where the workers are and encourage self-activity BUT we must pay attention to the ideological questions. We do not pander to struggles like IS but aid them, with respect, as a group with a distinct point of view and programme.

In this connection, the slogan 'Labour to power with socialist policies' is not in itself a bad slogan - given the coming general election and the lack of any real alternative to the LP. It must, however, be linked to other slogans and activities along the lines of 'Fight to make Labour win'. It is bad when it is used, like the SLL, passively, an explain-all and do-nothing, an alternative to self-activity. It could be used, however, as part of the ideological struggle - to drag the reformists to the centre of the stage and to mount an organised political campaign in the Trade Unions and LP.

DAVE SPENCER.

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COMMENT ON A COMMENT.

LTPWSP is a wrong slogan for two linked reasons:

1. It involves bowdlerising socialism. Either 'socialist policies' means expropriation of the expropriators - in which case LTPWSP, in anything like the present situation, is pure parliamentary-roadism. Or 'socialist policies' means Labourite socialism - a few nationalisations, etc. - in which case we are peddling Labourism.

2. It lets the Labour leaders off the hook (which is why it is the favourite recipe of all left reformists). 'Socialism' does not have a precise meaning in most people's minds. LTPWSP means simply "Labour to power to make things a little better somehow".

We must push for Labour to oust the Tories, and we must make demands on Labour. But our demands must be very precise, and they must go with clear revolutionary explanation. Nothing is gained by 'exposing reformists' if in the process we have blurred our own socialist programme into reformism.

The only situation where a slogan something like LTPWSP could make sense is if there is a big revolutionary crisis and a big left turn by the LP, and there is an actual possibility of posing genuine socialist policies (soviets, arming the workers, &c) in agitation as a way of intervening among workers supporting the LP. Even then I don't think LTPWSP would be the best formula.

I think that the quotations in my IB 14 part 1 article and in my forthcoming article on Workers Government show that LTPWSP is alien to Communism, to Trotsky, & to the early Fourth International. As far as I can make out, the slogan arose in the early post-war years. The Trotskyists saw the situation as one of sharp crisis of capitalism and powerful mass mobilisation. Under these great objective pressures, reformist parties would make big 'left' turns. Given the explosive situation, to remain with limited specific demands on reformist governments was to toy with trifles, and probably to be outpaced by the situation (As with the

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REASONS FOR NOT HAVING A L. P.

ENTRY PAPER.

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1. The problem of legality is a non-problem at the present moment. With the run-up to the election and internal strife in the LP, the likelihood of us being booted out is remote. Who do we think we are anyway? The LP has three times as many MPs and more LP councillors in one large town than we have members! Why assume repression, therefore? The legality problem would be as bad for our entry paper as for WF. In the unlikely event of us being expelled - then is the time to start an entry paper!

2. The question of 'wider appeal' to LP members, a paper with a different approach, seems to me to duck the issue of why we are entering. We seem to want it both ways. If, as SM stated when first proposing entry, WF needs a move to the right, to throw off ultra-leftish tendencies, if also we need a milieu - then our paper WF must and should reflect the shift. Of course LP entry is a tactic not a strategy, but for a group like ours, any major change in tactic can mean major re/dis-orientation. This is one reason for the sluggishness of our present approach.

3. We are surely not aiming for mass sales in the LP - we are aiming (a) to gain individual contacts - with these we can surely use WF; (b) to build LPYS and turn them out to the masses - for this we can use local bulletins and papers.

4. In the event of us building significant bases - and this will take time - local bulletins could grow into a good LP entry paper, if this were found useful. This base and growth are surely the only basis for a rank and file paper.

5. The desire for a paper must be matched by the resources. Can we produce it and sell it once a month? I say it is crass idealism (I mean that in every sense) to say that we can. Aiming for the impossible is demoralising. Despite the efforts of comrades at the Centre and elsewhere, there are still many inefficiencies and deficiencies in WF paper. We need to iron these out before proceeding to new and unnecessary tasks. We have not produced PR 2 and the 41 Theses, in spite of decisions taken at the highest level. A decision at this stage to produce another paper will create not enthusiasm but mockery.

6. One of the failings of WF paper, in my view, has been that it does not adequately reflect the work of the organisation. A turn to the LP means some concern in the paper for parliamentary politics at international, national and local level. This means an examination of ideology in the manner of 'Where is Britain going?'. The most important campaign must be to expose reformism in the LP and Trade Unions at all levels. A page a fortnight on this seems to me not unreasonable.

P.S. In case comrades mistakenly think me inconsistent, I would point out that the advocacy of an entry paper in my last IB contribution was added by JW.

P.P.S. A point I missed last time: LPYS branches can often use the local Tory paper for publicity, reports of meetings, etc. In fact in Coventry we have had several letters printed under the pseudonym "Workers' Fight", Tile Hill (cf. "Fair Dos", Spon End; "Highland Hector", etc.)

DAVE SPENCER.

Comment on a comment... contd:

British Trotskyists, who demanded a Labour gov't without coalition & with nationalisations, and were surprised when it happened).

The idea was not absurd then. But with the stabilisation (and the Trotskyists' eventual recognition of it) the LTPWSP line remained as a relic, without any objective basis. It became a dried husk of propaganda.

The modern supporters of LTPWSP have two alternatives. They either consciously use it as a propaganda formula (RSL, Right Opp.), or rely on a 'crisis' hysteria to back it up (SLL). Both alternatives are harmful. Martin Thomas

NC MINUTES

10/11/73

1. Phase 3 and the present situation

SC Phase 3 is decisively different from phases 1 and 2. Phases 1 and 2 had rigid norms - this is not so with phase 3. There is no definite norm to smash through. Phase 3 is not accompanied by the usual ideological overtones - i.e. "neutral" committees as with phases 1 and 2. The prices commission is discredited and is now being used to collect information. The key to phase 3 is flexibility.

Government is banking on an alliance with the trade union leaders. Up to now there had been few concessions to the TU leaders, but now in return for concessions the TUC would be used as policemen. E.g. the firemen's strike had been condemned by all the TU leaders.

Phase 3 contained many loops in the net - i.e. productivity clauses and the threshold clause. The ruling class aim is to raise the rate of investment by guaranteeing a rate of profit of not less than 10%. If profits drop below 10% then prices will be allowed to increase.

It was openly admitted that the government strategy was a gamble. On such questions as the world prices of essential commodities there could be no guarantee, and if they continued to rise then the government would be in trouble with investment and the threshold clause. It was not possible to make any predictions about how phase 3 will affect wages.

According to "Socialist Worker" and the "Economist" phase 3 is already in ruins, but SC doubtful about this. The Firemen had got £6, plus an extra £2.48 in Glasgow and a reduction in hours. Compare this situation with the miners who had smashed the rigid pay norm. But the firemen hadn't done so - the increase was justified by using one of the let-outs so there was no comparison with the miners.

Miners - the present offer was already 5 or 6% above the phase 3 guideline but the miners will still come out. Important to note that the claim on hours had been dropped. The Deceptive nature of the offer was a significant pointer to what the phase 3 strategy was - i.e. encouraging sectionalism.

Engineers' claim - dubious about there being any fight. Many engineers would gain nothing from the claim apart from the question of hours, which is not being taken seriously. On the question of the AUEW fine, it had been reported that several important factories in the Midlands had voted for going to the court. Doubtful about any serious struggle against phase 3 by the engineers.

Our position: we oppose claims being based on the phase 3 provisions. We oppose any attempts to use the loopholes as the basis for negotiation. Instead we put forward:

- 1) Fight for straight wage increases independently of the phase 3 provisions.
- 2) Stress the question of hours.
- 3) For lower paid workers (the worst off under phase 3), press for a minimum wage, tied to cost of living index.
- 4) Against productivity deals.
- 5) No redundancies - ¼ million workers due to be chopped.
- 6) Trade union democracy, stress the importance of rank and file movements.

JW On the victory of the firemen thought that it was very much a one off affair. It should be remembered that the firemen got more than they were demanding with a minimum of struggle. Obviously if this were to be repeated by the miners and engineers then phase 3 was dead as a dodo, but doubtful whether the firemen's victory provided any indicators. Generally the flexibility of phase 3 corresponds to a flexibility in the economic situation. The government has a policy of going for expansion and there has been expansion which has led to a demand for Labour. In a situation of a shortage of labour it is difficult to impose rigid pay norms without endangering the expansion - i.e. the profitable, go-ahead sectors must be allowed to compete for labour.

SM Thought there was an element of accident in the firemen's victory. Likewise it was partly accidental that the 7% norm had come up against the miners and got smashed while the phase 1 had come up against the weaker sections of the class who were defeated. Solidarity still important for the weaker sections of the class. Shouldn't give the Tories credit for success with phase 3 before they were actually successful. Still case for united front committees - should be argued for more strongly.

AH There were no fixed patterns for the class struggle. Learn from the miners, who are now thought of as a militant section but before the strike they weren't militant at all. Must look cold-bloodedly when analysing the government's strategy but that doesn't mean we're going to be passive. Very good analysis of phase 3 in IS journal, but no conclusions. There was a difficulty of giving the struggle over phase 3 a focus, for example on the question of prices. Supports demands put forward by SC. Should have a programme of demands rather than one slogan like "smash the norm" which was inappropriate.

PS Thought that SC & AH could lead to thinking that any particular group of workers has a fixed amount of muscle. For example take the teachers - no one expected them to be militant. Should stress solidarity and the linking up of struggles. Talking as if production losses could be contained, but if this is not so then there is not so much room for flexibility.

CB There was a tendency in the paper to assume that the working class will be contained within phase 3. the amount called for as a national minimum wage (£25) - thought it should be £35 because of the AUEW claim. Rank and File action - need to be concrete about how this relates to a national minimum wage. Teachers are not accepting any claim until the bottom rate is increased.

RR The significant thing about the economy now is that for the first time since the war demand is outstripping capacity. There is under-utilisation not because of lack of demand but because of lack of materials and skilled labour. When demand does run down there would be a return to unemployment and then the recurring necessity of united front committees.

On the ideological front the Tories had lost over the question of prices. More sections of workers were coming into struggle. Shouldn't think of the present situation as long term.

DS Lower paid sections would come to the fore. Concentrated attack on militants and well organised factories. Chrysler had made an attempt to smash the union. Triumph Meriden under attack because their high wages acted as a goal for parity claims. AUEW - Midlands not one factory came out on November 5th.

SM On slogans - perspectives for IMG from USFI discusses the same problems as we face. Still had to assimilate the lessons of the extended NC. Need to understand how slogans relate to the class struggle. Otherwise necessary changes in line become incomprehensible zig-zags.

JW Though there could be a valid criticism of the article in the paper of looking too closely and exclusively at the Tory strategy without seeing all the possibilities and thus assuming the government would be successful. Supported idea that this discussion should be written up for next issue of the paper.

PS National minimum wage based on cost of living - this should be a working class cost of living index. Should be stressed and explained more in the paper.

AH Agrees with SM - greater understanding needed about programmes and slogans. Up to 1912 the 8 hour day was the main slogan but it wasn't the only slogan. Slogans in the paper don't preclude other slogans like solidarity. The point about united front committees is what is to be their basis - of course can't rule out solidarity committees around a particular struggle. Possible to have a general programmatic line and particular slogans for particular times or specific issues.

SM Article in the paper to correct the emphasis of last issue.

CB Need for fuller explanation to the membership. Paper had come out with an unfamiliar line and the membership was not able to argue for it.

## 2. Nov 5th Strike against AUEW fine

### Reports

- Coventry - DS Jaguar-Daimler came out but nowhere else.  
EH Upsurge of right wing reaction to the Scanlon circular. Demands for retreat on the NIRC from quite a few factories. Right wing had come to the fore.
- Notts - PR Nothing had happened. District committee issued no call for action.
- M/C - NS Confed had called a meeting - response was uneven.
- Bolton - RR Paradoxically there had been a good response in Bolton. Area was backward and tended to do what national directives told them to do.
- Teeside - ST Poor response.  
ES TD had tried to bring out the Lackenby works, but NIRC strike got tied up with local dispute and was pushed to the background.
- L/Pool CB In general poor response for Liverpool - docks worked, some sites came out. No strong call from district committee.
- London SC Many cases of AUEW coming out but the rest of the factory continued working - e.g. papers were only stopped by the engineers coming out; the printworkers stayed at work. On the demonstration a lot of the workers came from outlying areas and not from the traditionally militant sectors.  
General impression was that the right wing had gained strength within the AUEW. Significant that the fine came out of the political fund - least sensitive area as far as membership was concerned.

## 3. Labour Party

JW Two important events have occurred since the last NC and should be taken into account. Firstly the LP Conference. We had seen here the mending of the links between the LP and TU leaders. Both needed each other. The LP leaders need the TU's because the LP is still based on the trade unions and the TU leaders need the Labour Party because they are now quite definitely looking towards the return of a Labour government as the alternative to any fight against the Tory attacks on the class. Thus a compromise was patched up before the conference began and the motion on the nationalisation of the 25 companies was dropped in favour of a woolly motion generally in favour of nationalisation.

Both on nationalisation and on pay restraint the TU retreated. Scanlon withdrew a motion unconditionally condemning all compulsory pay policy and the motion was heavily defeated as a result. The only area where the TU got through a motion which was opposed by the parliamentary leadership was on the Common Market - i.e. the least important, most diversionary issue was conceded by the LP leadership in return for TU concessions on nationalisation and pay policy.

Secondly there was the case of the by-elections which had been disastrous for Labour. Labourshare of the poll had dropped in all the four elections as compared with the general election. In Govan Labour had lost votes to the Scottish Nationalists and in Bewick had lost to the Liberals.

On our own work, this is reported in the IB. Generally most branches have taken the turn to entry work seriously, but the major need now was for centralisation to overcome the inexperience. London was still a problem and any national presence will have to be based on firm footing in London.

SM What effect would the by-election defeats have on the LP internally - surely they would stimulate those calling for a real change. Sluggishness in our work. Need for a centralising agency - special LP paper is just a stop gap. There had been objections to the "Where we Stand" column disappearing from "Workers Fight". The reason for this was to leave open the possibility of using "Workers Fight" to replace the special LP paper - i.e. transfer more resources into the LP.

CB Lack of central guidance. Wanted explanation about change in the role of "Workers Fight".

DS Thought there would be more crises at local council level along the lines of Clay Cross. There was now little room for manoeuvre for LP councillors - i.e. money for education - one local councillor had posed the alternatives "Either let education go to the wall or defy the government". In some areas Liberals were issuing bulletins

which by-passed traditional LP electioneering - could use this as an argument for starting bulletin

AH Wanted explanation about the LP paper being used as a 'stop-gap' - this wasn't how he saw it. By-elections will force LP to look to where it stands.

SM Plan is to put down roots in a number of areas - linked with a paper, based around Clay Cross. Would have to be careful not to be identified with an organisation. Going through a period of experiment. We may find tolerance or harrasment. If there is tolerance then there is a possibility of transferring more resources in to the LP. Shouldn't foul up the pitch in advance. In future will have to consider rationalising and fusing the two papers.

DS Couldn't see the need for a separate LP paper - "Workers Fight" as it was at the moment could be used perfectly well in the LP. No problem of legality.

JW Didn't think the main reasons for a separate LP paper revolved around legality. LP paper would have the same relationship to the group work as a whole as a fraction paper does at the moment. I.e. it would play a centralising role for that particular area of work. Would be more popular than "workers Fight" and carry a number of stories about LP & LPYS activity which would be disproportionate for "Workers Fight".

SC Difference was than it would be produced by members of the LP for members of the LP. Question of "stop-gap" was irrelevant.

SM It may be true that DS could sell "Workers Fight" within the LP, but can't base the while thing on DS's experiences.

ST Couldn't see the need for a separate LP paper. If the strategy was to turn the LPYS outwards then surely the LP paper would be covering the same ground as "Workers Fight". In Teesdie TD had nearly been expelled from the LP. Separate LP paper would be worse from the point of view of legality.

FR Agrees with ST. LP work was not the same as a fractional activity.

DS Thought the legality question was being overplayed.

Agreed - to defer any publication of a separate LP newspaper until after the next NC.

#### 4. Manchester & Bolton branches.

SM Proposed the merging of the Bolton and Manchester branches.

Reports were taken from the Bolton & Manchester branches. The main problem in Bolton appeared to be JG's move to London and RR's drop in activity. In Manchester there was a dispersal of the members and lack of a periphery except at the university. NS & RR both opposed to fusion.

Agreed - to refer the matter to the next NC with the SC intervening as necessary in the meantime.

#### 5. Resolution from Nottingham/Teeside

ST Introduced. Resolution called for

1. Circulation of minutes, documents and agenda 2 weeks before the NC.
2. Creche to be provided at NC's.

This was agreed with the following ammendments:

1. 1 weeks interval instead of 2.
2. Creche to be provided as required. I.e. if anyone wanted a creche to phone up and it would be provided - but no point in providing it automatically if it wasn't going to be used.

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