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WORKERS' FIGHT

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## STUDENT PERSPECTIVES

### Background

The expansion of higher education in the mid-sixties, following the recommendations of the Robbins Report (1963), produced a dramatic expansion in the total number of students, particularly in the public sector (ie Polytechnics etc). By the early '70's students in higher education represented 15% of their age group (still a very small proportion compared to many European countries). This expansion in the public sector particularly was the response to the need felt by British capital for a larger reservoir of trained technicians, scientists, and managers.

This transformation of the higher education system meant that increasingly the majority of students would not be a privileged few destined for the nexus of the Oxbridge old-boy network and the upper echelons of the ruling class, but would instead go into technical, scientific, and middle management posts. However, this change does not mean that students are becoming proletarianised (as the CP have claimed). Students have no definite relationship to the means of production and are ~~an~~ a group in transition, often between one social stratum and another. They are a de-classed group, whose consciousness is in the main petty-bourgeois. This consciousness arises both from the individualistic work situation at college and from expectations of the sort of job they eventually will find. (The majority of graduates go into teaching...)

In its early period of existence, the National Union of Students was a reflection of all the worse sides of the student milieu, and contributed to preserving that milieu as it existed by being affiliated to a right-wing CIA-funded international student body. The NUS was dominated by right-wing Labourites who used the union as a vehicle for their careerist aspirations in the LP, and on the ground the student unions were usually passive bodies with no union democracy. The individual unions were also only weakly linked into the NUS structure, whose main function was to serve as a travel bureau.

This conservative structure was massively shaken up, and almost completely transformed over the period 1968-72 by waves of student militancy. This movement began in a small way at the LSE in March 1967 with an occupation over the suspension of the union president by the Principal, Adams. The occupation was, significantly, led by socialists, but evoked little response from students elsewhere. But following the events of May-June '68 in France, an enormous surge of student militancy occurred in Britain. There were the bitterly fought occupations at Hull and Hornsey College of Art; the formation of the



Revolutionary Socialists Students Federation; the wave of VSC demonstrations, culminating in the October Grosvenor Sq demonstration in which nearly 100,000 students participated. The year ended with yet another struggle at LSE which concluded with the defeat of the occupation and the expulsion of two lecturers. The defeat of LSE represented very much a water-shed, separating the mood and struggles of '68 from what was to follow.

This tremendous outburst of militancy was undoubtedly inspired by the events in France and by the radicalisation produced as a result of the world-wide movement in support of the Vietnamese. Undoubtedly these were the 'triggers' which fired off an underlying feeling of frustration and discontent, a feeling produced by the transformation of higher education itself. As a result of the massive expansion of education, students found themselves having to cope with poor facilities, over-crowding, and also face a rigid and restrictive set of rules for their behaviour imposed upon them by dictatorial college authorities, who claimed to have the rights of parents over the students. It was from these conditions that the pre-conditions for the struggles of '68 arose, and which actually motivated many of the individual struggles themselves. It is a mistake to think, as does IS, that this period was more concerned over 'political' issues, whereas students are now concerned over 'bread and butter' issues. In reality, the two have always been interlinked.

Such motivations pushed students into action during the period 1970-72, often in opposition to attempts by college authorities or the government to restrict the effectiveness of student unions (eg. 'files' occupations of 1970; campaign against Thatcher proposals). However, despite the continuation of real ~~grievances~~ grievances, many of the most contentious issues have either been resolved, or found to be insurmountable. The Tories were unable to restrict student union autonomy, and since '68 many of the old restrictive rules have been relaxed. The low level of the grant still remains the biggest issue, but the grants campaigns of 72-75 have resulted in little being gained - only the same merry-go-round of demos, collapsing rent strikes, and victimisations with students' living standards continually falling. This has produced wide-spread demoralisation, reflected in the declining level of the grants campaign itself.

#### The coming year

Because of the factors above, coupled with the lull in the level of the class struggle since the election of the Labour government, the right-ward tendency of NUS politics first observed by the student fraction over a year ago will certainly



continue. This may well be exacerbated by the economic recession, although the effects on the student's expectations etc is not too clear. It is apparent, though, that student politics on an international scale are moving to the right in countries like USA and Germany.

Still, it is unlikely that the control of NUS by the CP-dominated Broad Left will be seriously challenged from the right, but the Broad Left itself will probably grow as the result of the drift from revolutionary politics. Paradoxically, IS should grow over the next year simply as a result of their 'turn' towards student politics and their massively increased intervention in student unions. Squeezed between these pressures, the IMG are losing and have lost influence, and are finding themselves having to resort to dubious gimmicks and Popular Front antics (eg Open Forum) to gain a periphery.

#### Our tasks

Given the general disorientation of the student left and its tendency to indulgence in the politics of rosy optimism, we can come forward and present a clear, realistic view of the present stage. This can only be done, with partial exceptions, on a propaganda level. We need then to argue for:-

- 1) Revolutionary unity. For co-ordination against the right and the CP, although always bearing in mind the inherent limitations of Soc Socs and other united fronts. We should not, however, come forward as professional 'conciliators' - fight for our politics even if it causes a split.
- 2) Combat growing NF influence by campaigning for No Platform for Fascists, and being prepared to put it into effect even without the support of the whole union.
- 3) internationalism, but not the sham internationalism of much of student politics. Concretely this means taking the issue of Ireland vigorously into NUS, although giving support to other solidarity campaigns where practicable.
- 4) more attention to be paid to propaganda work and less to the capture of posts through the creation of an election 'machine'.

In order to do this effectively, we need to discuss student politics more in the group. Students will in the near future probably provide us with many of our recruits - yet student work and the student fraction is a disgraceful shambles. Part of this attributable to the past laxity of fraction convenors, particularly myself, and also to the general lack of concern for student work. This situation must be remedied. The student fraction has begun to put its own house in order. We have elected MO'S as convenor, decided to have two fraction



meetings each term, and to produce a regular fraction bulletin. We hope that a discussion of student work at the Aggregate ~~xxx~~ will also further the work of the student fraction.

Neal Smith 5/4/75

General outline approved by student fraction unanimously.

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Since the writing of these perspectives, recent events seem to have confirmed the outline of the general tendencies in the student movement. The NUS conference placed the Broad Left firmly in control, with the IS increasing in influence and the IMG losing out.

At the same time the right in the shape of various nebulous coalitions showed an increased strength. Of significance also is the large vote that went to the NOLS candidates. I think that it may now be worth making a more detailed look at the local Labour Clubs in student unions.

The struggle at Lancaster has ended in defeat. Despite a large demonstration of support from unions all over the country, the students at Lancaster appear demoralised and reluctant to fight against the victimisations that have taken place. Once again the national structure has shown itself to be totally incapable of organising an effective counter-attack against victimisations, and this can only further dampen students' willingness to engage in struggle.

Despite the generally pessimistic tone of the perspectives document, I believe that we are only facing a lull in student activity. As the value of grant declines even further and facilities at college worsen due to the education cuts, students will find themselves being forced to struggle or to witness the collapse of NUS into irrelevancy. The present AUT strike and the protests about education cuts will intensify as the situation worsens. Healey has spoken of cuts in public expenditure in the Autumn - if these occur and affect higher education, as they almost certainly will, then the possibilities exist of forming a common front between students and certain sections of staff, who will also be hit hard by the cuts. Here lies the possibility for the student movement to get out of the dead-end in which it finds itself. I hope to develop this idea more fully by the Aggregate in conjunction with other student cds, and present an amendment to the student perspective document.

Neal Smith 6/5/75.

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ON "BUREAUCRACY" AND THE DCF by M Neal Smith

"A very strange animal, this bureaucratism, like the purple cow; everybody hears about it, but nobody knows about it. Nobody that is except a coterie of thin-skinned petty-bourgeois intellectuals, half-intellectuals who magnify a few pin-pricks suffered by their individual persons into a murderous bayonet charge against the rank and file of the party." (Canon 'Struggle for a Proletarian Party')

I would like to take up what I see to be one of the main issues raised by the Democratic Centralist Faction in their platform document. This is the question of 'bureaucracy' - a theme which runs consistently through the platform and through all the complaints made by the Bolton members of the DCF. They claim that WF is 'bureaucratised' and that the membership is like putty in the hands of a few powerful individuals, mainly on the Steering Committee. Let me say from the outset that I find this charge without any foundation - the case that the platform provides is only a rather shabby structure of distortions and unfounded charges, without any basis whatsoever in reality.

The section in the DCF platform on 'bureaucracy' begins in a pretentious and totally fallacious fashion by equating the situation in the Bolshevik Party after the October revolution with the situation that now confronts us in WF. The Bolshevik Party degenerated into bureaucracy through lack of cadres - the same is happening to WF... this is the essence of the DCF argument. Some cadres may recognise in their analysis of the DCF degeneration of the Russian revolution the same old, creaking argument used by the Mensheviks and now used by the state capitalists of IS. In fact, the argument provided by the ~~sixty~~ ~~xxxxxxx~~ DCF is almost exactly identical to that provided by Harmen in 'How the revolution was lost...' Bureaucracy, we are told, "become inevitable" (DCF) and also "self-perpetuating" ...what hope was there then for Trotsky and the Left Opposition in their heroic fight against the Stalinist apparatus? Were they inevitably doomed to failure? Should they have split from the Communist parties immediately? Were the seeds of the degeneration of the Bolshevik Party inherent in the party itself, and was a struggle against them just futile heroics? If the DCF are consistent, they must answer, along with Harmen, 'yes' to all these questions... Trotsky's answer, on the other hand, was a resolute 'no', Trotsky's own analysis of the process of bureaucratisation was far more complex, and included an analysis of the material base on which the bureaucracy rested i.e. the material privileges which accrued to the bureaucrats, and which made party posts the ambition of all the representatives of the reactionary sections of Russian society.

Have the 'bureaucracy' of WF such material privileges? Far from it, as every member is aware, the cadres at the centre, are in the main, the ones who make the most material and personal sacrifices. Are they in the same position as the leaders of the Bolshevik party after the revolution and faced with the same problems "although the scale is vastly different"? The comparison is laughable and yet the DCF raise it presumably not as a joke! Why? Because this is the only way that they can provide a 'theoretical' backing to their unfounded accusations of 'bureaucracy'. Even they realise that some sort of explanation has to be found to show how and why WF has become "bureaucratised" so they resort to spurious comparisons and state capitalist theories to back up their allegations.

The rest of the section following this in the DCF platform then goes on to make out the concrete case for their general argument. They present a picture of the 'principled' and "almost super efficient" edes in Bolton being unscrupulously bounded by a small group of bureaucrats centred in London, aided by their loyal but ineffective allies in Manchester. In reality, nothing of the sort happened...the Bolton edes simply 'magnify a few pin-pricks into a bayonet charge' And they magnify these pin-pricks by all sorts of exaggerations, distortions and slanders.

The DCF say that almost two years ago opposition began to form in the North West over the question of perspectives and LP entry. Very strange, this, as nobody was aware of this at the time... LP entry was only raised as a serious tactic at the Aggregate of 1973 and only decided upon at the extended NC of August 1973. At the February 1974 NC of the same year, RR declared that he had no differences with the group over the question of LP entry, and voted for a resolution outlining our present attitude to LP entry. Where was the opposition...? No articles were written for the IB; no resolutions were put to the NC; no alternative proposals were put to the Aggregate in 1974. The Bolton edes simply kept quiet = their opposition was confined to resisting pressure by the centre to get them to implement the line of the group on LP work. Of course, opposition was there, but it was not fought for politically at all = instead there was only a sullen refusal to do any LP work.

During the discussions on LPYS work in 1973, it was argued that it would be useful if we were to set up YS branches in areas where there were not already in existence. This would give us a useful base from which to pass resolutions, sponsor events etc. and would have been of invaluable use for the whole work of the group. Bolton was chosen as an area to set up an LPYS - it still hasn't been done! Far from the heavy hand of the centre dragging the poor Bolton edes kicking and screaming into the LPYS we have, and I include myself here be n far too lax in letting them get away with not implementing this decision. We have tried to persuade them of the necessity of getting LPYS work going, and have provided them with opportunities for getting aid from the regional YS's in setting the Bolton YS up...still nothing has been done. There has been no political opposition to this; only a dragging of the feet in carrying out decisions taken over a year ago, coupled with a refusal to seriously contest this issue politically. A recent example of the latter occurred at the last NW regional meeting. At the previous regional meeting, some edes of the DCF had asked for a discussion of the LP and entry work - this was put on the agenda for the last regional meeting. At this meeting not one member of the DCF from L'pool or Bolton turned up to defend the platform and their differences w the LP. Hardly the response of a serious faction!

It is behaviour like this which justify the use of the term 'clique' This is not just a 'nasty' word as the DCF seem to think, but has been given a very precise use by Can on in his book 'Struggle for a Proletarian Party' (a book highly praised by Trotsky). Basically, a clique is a group of people united principally along personal and apolitical lines - its dynamic is that of a personal fiefdom, people defending each other along completely apolitical lines. A striking example of this can be seen in the DCF platform itself (there are many others) under the section on Anti-Fascism. Here we find the DCF defending

the action of MD in allowing a fascist the right to speak at an anti-fascist public meeting. Yet RR had said after that meeting that he thought MD was wrong in what he did, and RR held this position till the last NC when he voted for a resolution condemning the actions of MD. Now, presumably all this has changed as the DCF closes ranks.

Since the Special Aggregate of 1973, the DCF platform is more or less the sum total of the opposition to the perspectives of the group - little else has been produced or said. This is what is meant by saying that the DCF eds are not integrated into the group - they opposed, but in an apolitical fashion, not by debate and argument. It was in the light of this that the fusion was carried out. The idea of fusion had been raised two years before the decision by the June 1974 NC. At the Aggregate and following it, there were discussions between the Manchester and Bolton eds and the Steering Cttee. These discussions lasted over the summer and culminated in SM arranging a whole series of discussions in the space of a few weeks in order to get the fusion carried out.

All through this process the Steering Committee were only making sure that a decision of the NC was properly carried out - surely this is their function. Where is the bureaucracy entailed in the decision of the NC, reached after months of discussion, and in the actions of the Steering Cttee in seeing through that decision? Nothing of the kind exists, unless you believe that the branch is an autonomous unit with rights above those of the NC and SC. That has never been the position of the group and runs contrary to all the norms of democratic centralism. However, it seems that some eds in Bolton do hold to this basically parochial position. For example, RR at the time of the fusion discussions accused the Steering Cttee of 'meddling' in the affairs of the branch. Such terms can only be justified in the context of believing that the branch is the 'sovereign' unit of the group, and that the Steering Cttee should not try to influence what goes on there. In the end, the logic of this argument is that there can be no national direction and co-ordination - the very essence of parochialism.

The DCF also allege that there has been "misreporting of meetings, distortion of arguments, personal smears" - these allegations are slanders on the eds of the Steering Cttee (presumably these are the people supposed to have been directing such a campaign, although it is not stated who these charges are aimed at) and nothing else. Where is the evidence for these serious charges? None is presented! There simply isn't any ... All the DCF are trying to do is to present the elected leadership of the group in the blackest possible light - this presumably to justify their own antipathy to these 'bureaucrats'... Reading the platform, you wouldn't guess that the membership had a mind of its own. You would never know that it was the group as a whole which decided to strengthen the LP entry tactic, which decided on that tactic in the first place, and which elected the NC presumably to make sure that tactic, amongst other things, was carried out properly. None would know that we have been debating the issue of LP entry since 1972...! Of course, the DCF is perfectly entitled to disagree with the line of the group and to fight for its minority position. However, they do not portray things in this light, not that it is their views which are at odds with the majority of the organisation, but instead they say that an unsuspecting membership is being led astray from the 'true Marxist perspective' by a few individuals. I, for one, strongly object to being cast into this sheep-like mould,

and resent this patronising attitude to the members of the group.

The charge of 'bureaucracy' levelled by the DC<sup>F</sup> is nothing more than the anguished outcry of a tiny minority who resent having to carry out the line of the group which they do not agree with. Instead of recognising that their views are contrary to those of the majority of the group as expressed by the Aggregate and NC on such issues as LP entry, they attempt to shift the blame for their own inactivity on these issues onto the leadership of the group.

Finally, I personally think that in the past the group and its leading bodies has often been far too 'soft' in its approach to carrying out decisions. The history of LP entry is far removed from bureaucratic action, from the centre dragging resisting cds into the LP. On the contrary, there has been hesitancy, sluggishness, a general lack of aggressiveness (features which mar all the work of the group). This is a result of too little central direction, not of too much; of too little central control, not of too much central control.

We do need an organised, central, ~~direction~~ administrative machine - so far the centre, as I think cds there realise only too well, is but a shadow of what is needed in this direction. We desperately need to strengthen the centre and its overall monitoring and guidance of the group (the idea of a Secretariat seems to be a step in the right direction). Unfortunately, the DC<sup>F</sup> platform is a step in the opposite direction - towards looseness and parochialism, towards petty bourgeois individualism instead of democratic centralism.

Neal Smith

LETTER FROM WF TO RMC

Dear Comrades,

We write in relation to your request that John Strauther be present at regroupment discussions.

If you consider JS a member of the RMC, that is your responsibility. In that case he can, of course, attend. Otherwise, we certainly will not agree to JS being present. This individual, as you are quite well aware, has been expelled from WF for gross indiscipline which capped a record of poisonous slander (some of this associated with a vigorous campaign in which JS participated to defend and exculpate ND's assault on one of your cdes). Yet you say that JS should be present because he expresses an interest in regroupment! Comrades, that makes sense only if 'regroupment' is just an easy corner for malcontents and displaced persons of all tendencies rather than a process leading to a unified democratic-centralist organisation.

It is true that cdes. not members of either WF or RMC have been present at previous regroupment meetings; cdes. moving towards the general political positions which WF and RMC have to a large extent in common, and towards commitment to a Leninist organisation. They have been present of both WF and RMC. JS is not such a case.

~~Having expelled JS~~  
Comrades, why is it that you are taking JS under your wing? If you are halfway serious about regroupment with WF, there can be no question of you taking JS's opinion of himself as more trustworthy than WF'S collective opinion of him.

Having expelled JS, we are not prepared to have him foistered on us again by the RMC. For the RMC to take up the cause of JS against WF is an act of thoughtlessness or a deliberate provocation. It is also potentially unprincipled combination.

The most substantial political differences with WF which you can find as excuses (and we believe they are excuses) to avoid fusion are over the Birmingham bombings and over 'housework'. That is, on almost all the great political questions of the day you are very close to WF. JS, as you very well know, is at the very best politically unbalanced, has positions which are a million miles from revolutionary marxism on such questions as the General Strike and the Common Market, has no conception of revolutionary democratic-centralist discipline, and has supported a document on wages for housework which is plainly reactionary and which evidences the most pathetic theoretical illiteracy. Comrades, one of the major issues on which you broke with the IMG was the General Strike - and JS has a position close to the IMG on that questions against WF.

The case of JS is quite a different matter from drawing in a cde. who still has IMG positions, but who we - you and us - think can be won over to our positions. JS is moving in the opposite direction.

It is legitimate, as part of a regroupment process, for RMC cdes. to express and discuss doubts about internal democracy in WF. We have not rejected such discussion. We have supplied files of our internal documents to RMC cdes., and in schools, in the pre-conference meeting, and in the JDB, WF cdes. have spoken as individuals, frequently expressing minority views. We have imposed restrictions and disciplinary measures only against public assaults on our organisation. As regards objective presentation of differing views on political issues, we have been open.

All that is very well. We even took the step of supplying you with the documents concerning the expulsion of JS and RR. We will also supply you with a copy of the reply to the DCF. (we assume that you will already have a copy of their platform). What we absolutely will not do is conduct a 'retrial' of the JS case yourselves as judge. It is reasonable that we should relax formal norms of democratic-centralism as regards discussion of general political issues - as we have done. But, of necessity, such matters as specific, individual disciplinary cases must be judged upon by those who know the full facts and who are fully and definitely committed to the organisation whose discipline is being maintained.

To put it bluntly: we are not prepared to give you a share in the jurisdiction over our internal life unless you show yourselves prepared to give complete practical commitments to building a united organisation. Nor are we prepared to accept any woolly conception of regroupment which imagines that the wreckers and deserters of the former DCF of WF can now take part in regroupment discussions.

We believe that discussions should continue - between you, us and any contacts who are interested and acceptable to both groups (specifically each group has the right to veto).

Fraternally,

WF secretariat

Letter to WF from cde in Australia

Dear Martin,

Regarding the CL (Communist League) I have recently received more detailed information from Robert Dorning of the CL's Melbourne branch. The CL has about 40 members arranged in 3 branches - Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane and an attempt is being made to start a branch in Adelaide.

The National HW is in Sydney and this branch has about 18 members. It is responsible for putting out the "Militant" a great deal of which is reprints and a straight transposing of the IMT's line to Australia, for instance in a recent issue they were interviewing favourably representatives of the PRT - who do not seem to even consider themselves Trotskyists.

According to RD the Sydney branch is at present split between two groups at present on a personal and perhaps a political level and this is hampering their work. A great deal of their activity, besides producing "Militant" is taken up with campaigns such as Chile or the Queensland racist legislation. Their 'trade-union' work appears to be carried out on an individual, rather than branch basis ie. if you work in an industry you participate in it. But despite this RD says they have been doing good work in the N.S.W. B.L.F. and the Redfern Mail Exchange.

The Brisbane branch has about 12 members and is on the verge of recruiting 4. It is involved with the Queensland B.L.F. and has some influence in the Aborigine Community. RD writes "The Branch supports the national leadership against the Melbourne tendency, but practically they are orientating increasingly to the class." The Brisbane branch of the CL has in fact been able to organize a branch there while an attempt by the S.W.L./S.Y.A. failed and their members were ordered to Sydney - this was told to me by Tim Percy.

In her letter to me Constance did not think much of these two branches, although practically perhaps the Brisbane branch is changing, and that they mechanically transpose many ideas of the FI to Australia and present it as an accomplished fact.

Regarding the Melbourne branch, who have constituted a tendency, although whether the whole branch is included I'm not sure, Constance wrote "I think these people are extremely good and serious and in many respects closer in their approach to WF than to the IMG." But she says they are handicapped by having to send their dues to Sydney as well as having to sell 'Militant', and that they are too small to stand alone.

The Melbourne Branch has about 10 members, and I think that RD is one of the driving forces in their acceptance of proletarian politics. He has been a 'Marxist' for about 8 years and the branch itself practices what is called "a turn to the class." They produce regular industrial bulletins - for the car industry especially in several languages - and in the



letters we received and the lit. they've produced they definitely seem to know where they are going. The branch itself operates from the ideas not only of "What is to be Done" but also Gramsci's "Soviets in Italy" which we read and it does give excellent Marxist reasons for "a turn to the class" but because of its nature ie. a short version of articles it is not a fully rounded-off pamphlet.

I am sending RD copies of WF as well as the "Open Letter on Revolutionary Regroupment" which has been circulated amongst the Melbourne branch. I hope to be able to attend the CL Conference in Sydney in April and if you require it I'll send you a report.

To sum up the CL it seems to me, although I'm vague about it, to be similar to the IMG "New Course" faction. In their documents from their 3rd National Conference they accept the idea of a "New Mass Vanguard" while admitting that one doesn't exist but that a "New Vanguard" does exist within which their goal is to win political and organisational hegemony of this vanguard in order to build a qualitatively stronger organisation which sinks its roots into the proletariat and is increasingly able to ~~take initiatives and action.~~ take initiatives and action." This seems to be a mechanical approach ie when ~~xxxxxx~~ we've seized control of this "politicized heterogeneous grouping we will then turn to the working class who have been patiently awaiting the inactivity of this group. Probably the actual sinking of roots would never take place as the CL would always be trying to gain hegemony in this new vanguard and in what it calls "politicized layers outside the working class". It is the CL's position on these ideas which has helped the Melbourne branch form a tendency but the branch obviously has had people, such as Constance and RD who had and have a definite idea of what to do and how to do it.

The last letter I received from RD consisted of a detailed account of his background. He sent me a series of documents, including two 'self'-criticisms concerning a) terrorism and b) Healyism and a detailed criticism of Spartacism. He has asked me "of any specific WF criticisms of Trotsky after 1917." I personally can't think of any criticisms - that is principled political position that WF could make - and I will write back to him saying this. However I would like to know if or if not WF has or had any criticisms. He has been talking to Constance about WF and he is interested in our attitude towards Trotsky and Trotskyism at the different stages throughout Trotsky's life and since. I'll send him a copy of "Workers Fight" and the FI and will cut a bit with relevant stuff from the "41 Thesis."

Obviously I will explain to him in a great more detail my own transition to Trotskyism from anarchism.

On Thursday the local paper here has a story "Trotskyite coup planned." The claim was made by a rightist Senator here after a Czech refugee who had been a member of the CPA and then the Socialist Workers League which he left three weeks ago and then revealed all along that he had been a member of the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation all along. Apparently he'd been making regular reports on the SWL/SYA and resigned from ASIO to "tell all" to the gutter press. This is the stuff that the rightists here love and no doubt paranoia will increase among the left.

With Communist Greetings Tony

## Female Sexuality

### Introduction

This subject is most tabooed by both capitalists and socialists; the latter often relying on Bourgeois ideology and psychanalysis to define female sexuality, often in the process denying woman any sexuality at all. On the other hand, works by Faurier and Reich see the sexual struggle being the prime basis for socialism; a permissive utopian socialism which does not necessitate any proletarian revolution. Despite advances made by Zetkin and Kollontai, women's sexual freedom (or even general liberation) has remained as an adjunct to socialist theory, not fully integrated into it. In Britain, there has been an almost puritanical streak in the socialist movement, resulting in reactionary formulations such as women's liberation being "diversionary" from the class struggle to the notion that the family is a 'proletarian institution', which the bourgeoisie attempts to corrupt and destroy. This is anti-marxist. The family as a refuge in a bourgeois society inevitably becomes a reflection of it. It is noticeable that female sexuality has historically been defined by men. Classic Freudian psychanalysis states that the early masturbation of the young female is an "infantile" sexuality. With maturity the woman's orgasmic zone transfers from her clitoris to the vagina. From thence forth all sexual satisfaction is dependant on the male penis, and the female organ of reproduction. Thereby a woman becomes "completed" on being a mother, her sexuality is reduced to a passive "penis ency". The politics of such a theory and its attendant ideology (the inescapable linking of women with children and home; that this is their "destiny") both biologically and psychologically, must be made clear. Not for nothing was the Nazi regimes slogan for women; "Children, church and kitchen". One of the benefits that oppression confers upon the oppressors, is that the most humble among them is made to feel superior; thus, a "ppor white" in the South can console himself with the thought that he is not a dirty nigger ... Similarly, the most mediocre

## What is Female Sexuality?

Our sexuality is a complex of physical/psychological/emotional/political factors, expressed in a many sided relationship between men and women. (This is equally true for lesbians who have to counter all the sex-typing ideology of our society).

Ans aspect of the male dominance of society is the dependence of women on men for self-esteem. This is carried over to our sex lives; where pleasing men is more important than pleasing ourselves. Women (and men) are encouraged to think about sex in competitive, abjectifying ways. For those women who do see sexuality as a premium beyond the childbearing function, it is in the context of success or failure. The degree of success is of course defined by man. Women are caught in a cross fire of mythology

- a) from our parents, church, schools etc; that sex is dirty, one must be pure for our future ideal husband.
- b) from Playboy, advertising etc that woman should be vivacious, sexually appealing etc.

Underlying all this, is of course, the persistent assumption of sexual inequality between men and women; The notion that women are incapable of orgasm\*, naturally frigid, find their satisfaction in children etc etc. Male dominated culture endows us with second-best status in all fields - none the least of these is our sexuality

### Virginity

A physical state, but also an attitude of mind. Girls are encouraged to stay chaste unsullied pure white, until marriage. Not to do so is a "sin" to descend into a "whore". Traditionally men have glorified the breaking of the hymen; marriage manuals and pornographers make much capital of it. In actual fact, ~~just~~ first intercourse is often painless/bloodless; the mythology of pain distorts reality to make women seem more helpless and men more aggressive than they are.

### Female Orgasm and the Myth of the Vaginal Orgasm

The latter has been one of the most oppressive expressions of male dominance. Female sexual satisfaction has little to do with the vagina or the size of a mans penis, or the length of intercourse. It is now proved that female sexual arousal is centered on the clitoris\*, that is her sexual organ.

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\* "By anatomic and psychological necessity, feminine sexuality is characterized by a receptive readiness for arousal by the male." (N.J. Eastman & E. Hallman, Williams Obstetrics, New York)

\*Masters & Johnson: Human sexual response.

(in fact many times more sensitive than the male penis, with approx. 2/3 times the number of nerve endings. The vagina is devoid of nerve endings. ~~The~~ Sexual intercourse then (as in its commonly accepted form in our society) between men and women is a product of masculine domination, it has little to do with women's pleasure.

Female anatomy has been hidden to women. The fact that for the functions of sexual orgasm, reproduction and urination women have specific organs/orifices is ignored/undisclosed in a male dominated society; since men have a singular organs for all these functions. An ironic aspect of the denial of woman's autonomous sexuality are the laws relating to homosexuality, lesbianism is not illegal, mainly because the general culture of society does not regard it as a possibility. Nevertheless, lesbians are discriminated against heavily for rejecting the sexual ~~sexist~~ patterns imposed upon them as women by society. (An important aspect of the Working Womens Charter is that whilst contraception and abortion are demanded, the rights of lesbians are not even mentioned.)

#### Contraception

Came very late (despite much early knowledge of contraception techniques often going back to early primitive societies) to the working class and to benefit women. Primarily introduced in the late 19th cent. because of the growing economic crisis of those years and was first adopted by the middle class; the working class did not generally adopt any contraception until the 30's. Historically, working class women spent a lot of time in pregnancy/childbirth/early years of rearing infants. This was accepted with a fatalism still left over today.

eg. "if you're meant to have a lot of kids, you will, not even the Pill will stop you." This meant for women a lack of control over their bodies inability to plan their lives - and often subservience to their husband (The habitual wife-beating is still a common phenomena in much of the working class - as the Women's Centres bear witness to).

The techniques of contraception which have been devised are mostly for women. Not only have women in the 3rd World (esp. Puerto-Rico) been exploited as guinea-pigs, but the onus is upon women to bear responsibility of contraception. Many women take the pill, suffering side-effects, risks of thrombosis, breast cancer etc. yet is not any freer than her mother, both are denied sexual freedom the double standard still applies - only the male is spared much of the responsibility he formerly faced. Of course ~~part~~ great gains have been made but the (comparative) sexual liberation of males in recent years has often been at the expense of women.

## Abortion

Is a threatened "right" granted to women comparatively recently. Yet it is in no way fully operated or freely available via NHS. The reactionary ideology (eg. that the foetus is a "life"; abortions murder) supported by the bastions of the Catholic Church perpetuate a mystique, and aura of horror which for many women surround the idea of an abortion. (This is not completely an irrational attitude, Before the Abortion Act, back street abortions were often fatal to women, or lead to permanent injury sterilisation. Not less dangerous were women's own attempts to miscarry; and traditionally whether in childbirth or gynecological operations women are treated unsympathetically). The right of safe abortion on demand is one which women must achieve if liberation is to mean anything.

## A MARXIST APPROACH TO SEXUALITY

1. Must define sexuality - in capitalism via Marxism.
  2. Women's sexuality under capitalism.
    - Women workers exploited as all workers by selling labour power
    - Women's sexuality has been an important stimulus to sale of commodities on the market
    - reproduction of the labour force
    - ideology - women seen by male workers as inferior to whole group of men and serves to deflect the frustration of the class as a whole from the real enemy capitalism.
- Therefore, female sexuality is defined not by women themselves on an equal relationship but by men in a relationship of inequality.

## SEXUALITY UNDER CAPITALISM

1. Women do not have a sexuality - they are sexual objects (eg. Tit and bum)
2. Nature of sex contact is defined by men eg. a hole; a vessel for sperm; and children, a tool of male satisfaction.
3. Sexuality is defined by penetration; thus, in relation to the male penis despite the fact that the main source of sexual arousal and satisfaction is for women is the clitoris, not the vagina.
4. General ignorance and mystique of the female body - for men and women of all ages, and class. This providing the basis for much of the ad-man's nauseating exploitation (eg. Manekin cigars).

## SEXUALITY AND THE REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

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The process of emancipation of women therefore includes:

1. Her contribution as an organized worker in production to the class struggle.
2. The reproduction of the relations of production centring around the home and community.
3. Her struggle in relation to her sexual subordination and objectivacation. A struggle for self-definition self respect.  
\*(without which women will not play an adequate part in the revolution, and therefore limiting the success of the proletarian revolution in itself)

The above includes as a necessity some of the activities, which many of the left claim are characteristic of "petty bourgeois feminists". These includes demystifying women's sexuality, discovering that they can achieve sexual satisfaction independently of men, starting self-examination groups to control sexual aspects of their biology etc. Not least of these is of course, the absolute necessity for unlimited and safe contraception, and abortion upon demand; necessary to seapate sexuality from reproduction. (and thus to enable humanity to control nature and make "choice" a possibility for women). These are two demands which the revolutionary left must take up and pose to the working class, if women are to play an equal part in the destruction of a system which oppresses both man and woman.

Elsie Kemp



## THE WORKING WOMENS CHARTER

(document for Women & Socialism Conference)

While most of the campaigns of the Women's movement have been concerned with single aspects of women's oppression (abortion, nurseries, equal pay etc) socialist analysis has frequently pointed out how those different aspects are in fact closely interlinked.

The family set-up as it exists under capitalism, making working class women "the slaves of the slaves", conditions inequality of pay and conditions. Capitalist society throws upon each individual woman, within the individual family, the tasks of housework as her chief responsibility. As regards wage labour, the millions of women confined in the home form a vast reserve army, to be drawn into underpaid and generally unorganised jobs when needed by capital.

But capitalism also creates the material preconditions for the liberation of women. Technical advance opens the possibility of doing away with much of the drudgery of housework. Cheap reliable contraception means that women need no longer be slaves to child-bearing. And by drawing women into the workforce, capitalism creates a powerful force for liberation.

Unless women workers, organised in the workplace lead a fight for equality there, there can be no hope of mobilising millions of women isolated in the home. But unless, also, working class women become aware of the oppressive nature of the family, and organise to fight against the restrictions imposed on them by campaigning for nurseries, abortion on demand, etc., any movement in industry will be paralysed.

For this reason, socialist women have advanced the ideas of socialisation of housework and of legal and economic equality for women, not just as single demands in themselves, but as part of a unified perspective.

Before we take up the question of how the Working Womens Charter relates to this perspective, though, it is necessary to deal with a different line of argument which has gained some support in the movement.

### WAGES FOR HOUSEWORK

In opposition to this perspective, Maria della Costa and Selma James put forward the theory that women in producing the labour force of the future, and maintain the labour power of her husband do socially productive work. Housework is therefore essential to the maintenance

OF capitalism and the system of relations in which surplus value is produced. From this analysis they wrongly drew the conclusion that housework produced surplus value exactly as work outside the home. The only difference is that women do not receive a wage; Wages For Housework would give them real power and independence.

In demanding Wages For Housework they see the centre of womens struggles as taking place in the home rejecting the necessity of freeing women from housework to take part in the collective struggles of the working class. The Wages for Housework demand institutionalises the whole idea of housework and womens role within the family and thus is necessarily opposed to the socialisation of housework.

The WORKING WOMENS CHARTER which includes the demand for nurseries and for women to go out to work is to a limited extent a concretisation of the perspective of the socialisation of housework, and is therefore an important step forward for the womens movement. It also covers womens position both at home and at work is to a limited extent a concretisation of the perspective of the socialization of housework, and is therefore an important step forward for the womens movement. It also covers womens position both at home and at work and focuses the importance of women going to work and fighting for their demands within the trade union movement.

However, the history of the Working Womens Charter has been an extremely stormy one. There has since the Charter was compiled in 1974 been an enormous amount of confusion and conflict between those involved in the campaign about what the Charter is for; who it is aimed at; and how it relates to the womens movement.

The Charter by its very nature as a list of demands is open to completely different interpretations by whoever was reading it. It does not offer in it any specific method of working. It also does not offer any proposed form of national organisation or co-ordination and many groups which had grown throughout the country have in fact found the demands of the Charter inadequate.

#### SOME PROPOSALS FOR AMENDING THE CHARTER

The Working Womens Charter recognises that one of the most important aspects of the Charter is the demand that women should take up the issues affecting their position at home and at work and fight for them inside the trade union movement. But for this it is necessary to fight for equality for women in the trade unions.



Therefore point No. 10 in the Working Womens Charter should be amended as follows:

- we are for women paying equal contributions and receiving equal benefits from trade unions
- trade union meetings should be held at worktime to enable women workers to attend; where it is possible for creches to be provided
- unions to campaign to recruit women workers (some unions like the TGWU have made no effort at all to organise the large numbers of women workers in the areas they cover).
- proportional representation for women in the leading bodies of unions and in allocating official positions
- for womens groups or caucuses inside the trade unions (at rank and file level it is enough to have just token womens committees at top bureaqueratic levels) it is absolutely vital that women go through the experience of organising themselves and working out and fighting for their specific demands within the trade unions.

Point No. 1 should be amended to include the demand:

- for a sliding scale of wages; work or full pay

At the present time many women will be made redundant and sent back into the home - we must take up the issue of unemployment and demand that women should be given work or full pay.

Point No.6 should be clear about the fact that:

- we are for state financed but community controlled 24 hour nurseries and no cuts in social expenditure

This should not of course be counterposed in a sectarian way to nurseries provided by individual employers <sup>3</sup> but we must demand qualified staff.

Also there should be ammended verscion of the Charter and not half a dozen - this creates confusion and detracts from the national character of the campaign.

The Working Womens Charter is not a magic charm. Simply producing a list of demands will not create a mass revolutionary women's movement unified round a clear strategy. In the situation of the continued general indifference of the labour movement to the question of women's oppression, it is inevitable that most of the activity of the women's movment will continue to take the form of single-issue campaigns.

If we recognise that reality, it does not ~~xxx~~ mean that we passively accept it. The limitation of the womens movement to one-off campaigns such as abortion does restrict the ~~women's~~ movement's scope and potential. In America the movement restricted to the question of abortion and drastically dwindled when partial reforms were acheived because it was never broadened out.

The Working Womens Charter provides a framework for concerted propaganda within the labour movement on the question of womens oppression. The Working Womens Charter campaign can help to organise women, to link up different struggles, to link and promote women's causes within the trade unions and to provide a continuing 'backbone' for activity round single-issue campaigns.

With capitalism in crisis the full implementation of the Charter on a national scale would need the balance of forces drastically changed in our favour and for capitalism to be faced with a struggle of revolutionary proportions. It is important at all times to see the Working Womens Charter in the context of the demand for the socialisation of housework and the struggle for socialism. To see the Charter as merely a list of demands some of which are realisable under capitalism is to miss the point. Women will always be oppressed and super-exploited while they are tied to the family. The struggles around specific issues must be continually broadened out and related to the perspective of the socialisation of housework and of socialist revolution.

#### THE CHARTER AND THE OFFICIAL MOVEMENT

The Charter runs the risk of being controlled by the trade union bureaucracy who may use its adoption as a left face to cover up their betrayal of womens struggles. This is not to say that there is no need to fight for the Charter to be adopted by Trades Councils to get our ideas across and to gain contacts and information. However, this can never become a substitute for a real campaign and the gaining of a base amongst women on the shopfloor and in the community. We have to use the official machinery - Trades Councils - to gain that base - but we must be wary. The bureaucracy does not always respond to rank and file pressure, as a passive tool in their hands - but in some cases will actively work against womens demands and struggles. In the SEI strike in Manchester the AUEW did nothing when members of their union crossed the womens picket lines and helped to prevent a successful outcome of that strike.

We argue against the Communist Party's strategy of rooting the Working Womens Charter in the trades councils. To do this would necessarily exclude large sections of unorganised women; and would reduce the Charter Groups to mere pressure groups on a body on which they would have no real control. Energies would be focused into pressurising the bureaucracy into carrying out womens demands instead of helping women

to organise themselves to take their own initiatives.

#### THE TUC WOMENS CHARTER

The TUC have now initiated their own Charter obviously disturbed by the support that the Working Womens Charter has been getting and which is not directly under their control.

The TUC Womens Charter fails to mention at all the question of abortion and contraception. Nothing is said about the right of women to control their bodies and be able to decide whether they want a child or not; despite the fact that the TUC Womens Conf. this year supported the right for women to have abortion on demand.

Instead of putting forward the ideas contained in the socialisation of housework they demand that employers allow women to work flexible hours so that they can go home and do the housework and look after children!

They are therefore for housework remaining privatised - a burden on women inside the family - and against making it the job of society as a whole.

The whole TUC Womens Charter is extremely vague and its intentions are quite reactionary. However, it is also true that the TUC can attract many more women than the Working Womens Charter campaign. We should, therefore, think about how we can turn the TUC Charter to our own advantage.

#### HOW CAN A CAMPAIGN BE BUILT?

The Working Womens Charter Campaign should fight for the Rank and File Movement to adopt the Charter. Also, to get it adopted by trade unions, trades councils, and LP Wards to obtain active support for it.

There should be an establishment of a permanent national structure and organisation: delegates from all WWC Groups; trade union branches, LP branches which have accepted the Charter and are actively working around it. With a democratically elected committee.

The possibility should also be examined of:

A national conference to set up a structured campaign based on the labour movement and socialist bodies actively supporting the WWC. That campaign to push amendments to the TUC Charter in line with the Working Womens Charter.

Taking initiatives in calling local meetings under the TUC Charter aegis to publicise the Working Womens Charter.

A Bulletin should be produced which anyone working in the campaign would be allowed to contribute to with an editorial board elected from the National Conference of the Working Womens Charter and responsible to it. This would gather information and do research work; publicise successes and try to analyse failures. It should also provide a focus for womens struggles - organise demos and pickets. One way for the Charter to get a base amongst working class women is to organise canteen meetings in factories where there are large numbers of women.

On the basis of these perspectives we believe socialist women should fight for the Womens Liberation Movement to support the Working Womens Charter.



## THE WORKING WOMENS CHARTER

When capitalism divided work from home there was an immediate contradiction. There was a new demand for female labour in the factories, but at the same time it was women who were needed at home to raise children and feed the families. Women were unable to turn this contradiction to their advantage and were forced to labour both at home and work.

By nineteenth century trade unionists had begun to realise the necessity for the working class as a whole to relate to the position of women in society. Tom Mann in 1890 proposed that women should organise co-operative child-care, shopping, cooking, eating, and washing, but the trade union movement as a whole has but paid lip-service to the problems of women workers and mothers.

In fact until the Working Womens Charter was drawn up there was no overall list of demands about womens' position in society, which related to women at home and at work.

Why has there been a gap of over 80 years before the Trade Union Movement has taken up the question?

The root cause is that it has taken this long for women to be even partially integrated into the Trade Union Movement. For men the trade unions were in many ways a continuation of the guilds to which many of them belonged, and thus identification with them was immediate. But for women who had always been confined within the home and the family, isolated and disorganised, and who had always seen life from an individual view-point or from the view-point of the family, it was not an easy step to join a trade union. For women to join unions they had to be convinced that it was worth them joining, and that there were immediate benefits from doing so. And this was the crux of the matter, which formed a vicious circle.

Male trade unionists who still retained to some extent fears of losing their privileged position within the home, were not exactly bursting with enthusiasm to fight for women. Because of this many women in turn could not see the point of joining the unions and thus the Trade Unions were never forced to take up the issues.

Sheila Rowbotham in her book "Hidden From History" describes this reaction in the light of the nineteenth century. When women joined a trade union many of them left after a week or so because they could not see what a trade union had done for them since they joined! However, in times of a strike, the union membership amongst women thrived, when the union became a symbol of unity and of immediate relevance to them.

Slowly the attitude of women is changing although still large sections of women workers who are so used to being isolated and arguing from a position of weakness, feel the Trade Unions are remote and unnecessary.

Not only has the response from the unions been bad in organisational terms, but they have also made no attempt to solidarise with women's struggles. The need for a womens' caucus in the trade unions has been clear for a long while, proved time and time again by women workers who are forced to come out on strike by themselves. In such situations, like the recent SEI strike in Eccles, the women were not ~~supported~~ <sup>supported</sup> by the union during the original dispute, were left isolated when they felt there was no alternative but to go out on strikes, and when they were on strike male members of their own union scabbed on them.

Such is the need for a consistent fight within the trade union movement to take the question of women seriously.

In the late 1960's, beginning with the Ford machinists at Dagenham, there were a number of strikes around specifically the demand for equal pay and conditions. Since that time there have been many, mostly unsuccessful strikes around demands which solely concern work. The main reason why these strikes were unsuccessful was that the women were left completely isolated as small units within a specific union, unable to get any support from members within their own union, unable to get any support from members within their own union, never mind support from other unions. Within this background the Working Womens Charter could prove to resolve this situation.

1. The most important thing which the Charter could resolve is that it has the potential to forge vital links between women in trade unions, so that if there was a strike the strikers would not feel weakened by isolation.
2. Providing a written list of demands the Charter could solidarise a strike as strikers would adopt the Charter as their platform of struggle.
3. By organising Charter Groups, important mistakes would not be made by women workers, as the Charter could provide the necessary links between workers in the same union industry or area.

However for this to become a reality and not just a pipe dream it is necessary to know how to use the Charter. This problem I will lay out in more detail later.

But to look at the Charter itself. It was first put forward by the London Trades Council in 1974 and has since been taken up throughout the country by women's groups, trade unions, and trades councils.

#### The Demands

The demands so far stand as:

"We pledge ourselves to agitate and organise to achieve the following aims:

1. The rate for the job, at rates negotiated by the trade unions with a national minimum wage below which no wages should fall.
2. Equal opportunity of entry into occupations and ~~compulsory~~ in promotion, regardless of sex or marital state.
3. Equal education and training for all occupations and compulsory day-release for all 16-19 year olds in employment.
4. Working conditions to be, without deterioration of previous conditions, the same for men as for women.
5. The removal of all legal and bureaucratic impediments to equality eg. with regard to tenancies, mortgages, pension schemes, taxation, passports, control over children, social security payments, hire-purchase agreements.
6. Improved provision of local authority day nurseries, free of charge, with extended hours to suit working mothers. Provision of nursery day classes in day nurseries. More day nurseries.
7. 18 weeks maternity leave with full nett pay spread before and after the birth of a live child. 7 weeks after birth if the child is stillborn. No dismissal during pregnancy or maternity leave. No loss of security, pension or promotion prospects.
8. Family planning clinics supplying free contraception to be extended to every locality. Free abortion to be readily available.
9. Family allowances to be increased to £2.50 per child, including the first.
10. To campaign amongst women to take an active part in the trade unions and in political life so that they may exercise influence commensurate amongst men trade unionists that they may work to achieve this aim."



These were the demands that were taken up in the original draft of the Charter. In many localities the Charter has been altered by the conference at which the amendments to the Charter will be discussed has not yet taken place. Worker's Fight has proposed several amendments to the Charter which should strengthen it, particularly on the questions of T.U. equality, nurseries and the question of work or full pay.

But what is most important at this early stage is to know how in fact to use the Charter effectively.

#### THE CAMPAIGN SO FAR

1. In most areas the Charter Groups have been concentrating on getting the Charter adopted by union branches and Trades Councils to start a campaign. In a period of relative non-activity, it has been difficult to focus on actual strikes or issues which are happening, and so the past six months have been concentrated on propogandising around the Charter and its demands. In some areas this strategy has resulted in much token support, although the test of that support from the unions has not yet materialised.

Sub-committees of Trades Councils have been formed, ad-hoc committees exist, but no-where is there a consistency about how the campaign should be carried out.

2. The most important recent strike of women was at Salford Electrical Instruments. It is strikes such as this around which the WWC should be working, to get the strikes to adopt the Charter. As yet the Charter has not had much success in this field which is undoubtedly the most important aspect of work a Charter Group can and should do.

3. As for Rank and File involvement of individuals to the Charter the main problem is keeping the women involved when there is little activity.

#### The Problems of The Charter Campaign

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The main problem so far is the lack of organisation of the campaign as a whole. Within the umbrella of the Working Women's Charter there are organisations which have totally different concepts of what a Charter is for, how it works, and who it is aiming at. The major threat to the existing Charter is the Communist Party.



## The Communist Party

Because of the looseness of the present structure of the WWCC, organisations like the Communist Party pose a great threat to its continuance.

Basically what the CP is aiming for is that the Charter becomes an appendage to the trade union movement. They are trying to get the trades councils to give the Charter "legality" i.e. to stifle it before it really gets going.

Opposed to a fighting body of militant women workers from the rank and file of the union, they want the delegates on the T.C.'s to be the local representatives of the WWC. By doing this they could effectively blow out any hopes of linking with women in struggle. If a strike situation did arise we would probably go through the same fiasco as has happened over the Shrewsbury building workers, where the CP completely backed down and literally has left the pickets to rot in jail.

## The IMG

Despite all the good work the IMG has done in getting the WWC off the ground if the CP do manage to take control of organising the Charter, then the blame will rest firmly on the shoulders of the IMG.

The IMG are using the WWCC in the same way they use TOM, as a means of extending their contact list. They don't seem to see the necessity of building an actual rank and file women's organisation as the only way of developing the Charter. This is mostly due to the fact that they in many ways "outside" the working class.

## Demands

The demand which seems to have caused the most controversy is that of abortion, which many Catholics have opposed. Many discussions at trade union level or Labour Party Wards have ended in a discussion just about the pros and cons of the abortion issue. This in many ways has been at the expense of working out what the WWCC can do. But nevertheless it would be a serious mistake for us to do what the anti-abortionists suggest, that is taking out the section on abortion, and concentrating instead on the issue of contraception.

## Sub-committees

Apart from the position of the CP on making the Charter a part of the trade union bureaucracy, there is a danger in the idea of sub-committees in general. And that is that if a Charter group is a sub-committee of a trade union or a LP ward, then it can lose its autonomy. It does not necessarily mean that it will, particularly if we have comrades on that sub-committee; but if we see that the WWCC should be a type of rank and file body, it can quite easily be instructed as to what it says.

## Activities

This in itself poses problems, that is knowing what a Charter groups should be doing. Most activity up to now has been purely propagandists in nature; getting support in token ways. In many ways this token support is dangerous because I doubt if those giving such support realise exactly what the WWCC is.

## The Future

The future of the Working Womens' Charter very much depends on what we can do.

At all costs we must resist the CP's manoeuvring around the Charter, but we cannot resist their action unless we can counterpose a positive programme of action.

1. We should base our intervention around the fight for a WWC Movement a rank and file organisation of women organised throughout industries in this country. Recognition that the WWC can only be developed by a movement is crucial to a correct understanding of what needs to be done.

An important question raised by this is what relationship there should be between the WWC and the Rank and File Movement. I propose that we should call for liaison between the WWC and the Rank F movement, but

- a) as the R&F has not yet recognised the WWC it would be ludicrous for us to propose that the WWC should become a section of it.
- b) we defend the right of women workers to organise autonomously.

2. That we intervene at the National Working Womens Charter Conference on the following positions:

a. That the WWC declares itself as a movement.

. That it sees itself as a rank and file organisation, committed to building a national organisation.

b. That a national organising committee be elected which is responsible for co-ordinating activities in the localities

Produce a national bulletin.

The Charter is essentially a list of reformist demands. However, because of the crisis that capitalism is in - the fact that it is trying desperately to cut back social expenditure; make women unemployed and force them back into the home; break the strength of the trade union movement - if taken up in the right way can have revolutionary potential.

The extent to which it can become so depends on:-

- (i) To what extent the WWC can take initiatives and mobilize women at their place of work and spread the ideas of womens self activity especially through the setting up of womens caucuses etc.
- (ii) To the extent that we can explain and show the nature of the trade union bureaucracy; the role they play and whye they will consistently fail to meet womens demands.

At all costs we must prevent the trade union bureaucracy and left wing labourites from using the WWC as a left face in the same way as they have used the Equal Pay Act.

We must also see the Charter as a way of getting our ideas across especially as regards the family - the fact that the Charter is not just a set of individual demands but as something much more than that.

That we want all tasks that our ~~men~~ are now the burden of individuals in society - especially women - to be the responsibility of society as a whole. That we believe the family to be a material and ideological prop to cap. An institution which oppresses everyone within it, especially women and children and is used to super-exploit women on the labour market.

Although I agree with Sue about setting up a rank-and-file type movement around the WWC formed in work places I also see the Charter as:

- a) linking up organised and unorganised women
- b) linking up women in the home with those at work

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It is important that we fight inside the trade union movement for the idea that they have a responsibility to fight for the demands of the unorganised sections of workers as well as those of the organised sections; and to take up demands which have not traditionally been thought of as being in their scope especially as they relate to women.

The Communist Part particularly will try to concentrate on aspects such as equal pay and try and play down ideas relating to social demands - this being a reflection of the CPs whole analysis on the family as being a haven of peace in the midst of heartless capitalist society and will therefore be against the idea of socialisation of housework.

The CP is in the process of trying to take over the campaign (SE Regional TUC Conf.) and to as they put in 'root it in the trades councils' which means in effect handing it over to the trade union bureaucrats and turning their backs on the organised sections of women active in the campaign.

The IMG particularly I feel has been completely unprepared for the ideological battle needed to combat these ideas - presenting the Charter as a good set of demands to be taken up the trade union movement without being aware of the pitfalls.

This is partly why I feel a national bulletin to be so important so that it can:

- Draw up a balance sheet on the Charter and link up the campaign in different areas.
- Discuss ideas on how the Charter should be used and to carry out an ideological battle against the CP and other reformist tendencies.
- Discuss the separate demands of the Charter.

Pat Longman

1. THE RATE OF THE JOB, REGARDLESS OF SEX, AT RATES NEGOTIATED BY THE TRADE UNIONS, WITH A NATIONAL MINIMUM WAGE BELOW WHICH NO WAGES SHOULD FALL.

1975 is Equal Pay Year - but according to NUS statistics 95% of women are employed in jobs where equal pay does not apply.

	Women (18 and over) Average Weekly Wage	Men (21) and over Average Weekly Wage
Manual Workers	£17.1	£32.8
Non-Manual Workers	£22.1	£43.5

1972 DEP Figures: Womens earnings little more than half men's average earnings.

The Equal Pay Act states that women will get 'equal pay' if:

They are employed on 'like work' with men ie. broadly similar work.

or

That they are employed on work that is 'rated' as equivalent to mens work. Your work can only be rated equivalent to a man's job by an official job evaluation study.

In order to negotiate for equal pay women can compare their pay and conditions with men only who are:

- a. employed in the same place of work; or
- b. employed by the same employer at another place of work where the same conditions and terms of work apply.

Women cannot claim equal pay with men who are working for the same employer at another workplace if the terms and conditions of employment are different.

If a collective agreement (one made between trade unions and an employers association) applies only to male employees, it need not be extended to women.

The Equal Pay Act does not provide any method of ensuring that women get equal pay if they are doing 'womens work' and there are no men doing 'broadly similar' work with whom they can be compared.

Does not prevent job evaluation studies making use of standards that discriminate against women - giving a higher rating to work which requires physical strength and a lower rating to work which requires manual dexterity for intricate work.

Most employers are trying to get around the Equal Pay Act, eg. The Paper and Metal Box Federation have compiled 4 points whereby the act can be avoided:

1. Long service
2. Merit
3. Attendance bonus
4. Willingness to work - overtime worked for a stated amount of time

The re-classification of jobs is almost comprehensively done. Eg. there is an engineers circular which states that there should be 2 classifications women - light work, men - heavy work. Where there is a discrepancy contract labour should be employed.

On December 3rd 1974 the average wage for a man was £50  
" " " " a woman was £25

70% of women earned less than £20 per week

In 1945 women earned 53% as much as men.

In 1972 women earned 51% as much as men

## 2. EQUAL OPPORTUNITY OF ENTRY INTO OCCUPATIONS AND IN PROMOTION REGARDLESS OF SEX AND MARITAL STATUS

a. Most women work in service industries, shops and unskilled jobs. More women are being employed, but the number going into unskilled jobs is also rising.

b. Women constitute 51% of the population

" " 38% of the workforce

c. Examples of ratios:

22% in professional work (including teachers - most women being on scale 1)

43.3% In service industries

95% Of nurses are women

## 3. EQUAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING FOR ALL OCCUPATIONS AND COMPULSORY DAY RELEASE FOR ALL 16-19 YEAR OLDS IN EMPLOYMENT

a. According to the NUSAN Report, "The prime responsibility in education is to train her for the home."

a. At "O" level exam women constitute 51% of passes

At "A" level " " " 41% " "

The general pattern is that the higher up the educational ladder you look, the less women are accepted onto courses and achieve passes.

Day Release:

1973: 10.4% of girls in employment had day release

39.7% of boys " " " "

1973: 7% of girls had apprenticeships

42% of boys " "

Over  $\frac{3}{4}$  apprenticeships for girls in hairdressing.

Despite all legislation and the setting up of the Industrial Training Boards 64% of boys and 90% of girls get no training whatsoever.

1970: In engineering and related industries there were 110 females apprentices to skilled craft occupations, 112000 male.

1970: 15,801 girl apprentices - 11,336 in hairdressing and manicure.

#### 4. WORKING CONDITIONS TO BE, WITHOUT DETERIORATION OF PREVIOUS CONDITIONS, THE SAME FOR WOMEN AS FOR MEN

a. At the moment firms apply for exemption from the Act which prevents women from working nights and most firms are successful in their application.

b. generally most supporters of the WWC say that it is undesirable for women to do shift work, just as it is for men. However, in the present industrial set-up it would be impossible in many cases to achieve equality when the difference lies in that the men are doing shifts.

b. Retirement age. At the moment women retire five years earlier than men. The same argument seems to apply here as it does with the shift working. But the Charter is against the difference in retiring age affecting retirement pay.

#### 5. THE REMOVAL OF ALL LEGAL AND BUREAUCRATIC IMPEDIMENTS TO EQUALITY EG. WITH REGARD TO TAXATION, MORTGAGES, PENSION SCHEMES, PASSPORTS CONTROL OVER CHILDREN

a. Probably the most important of these is the married women's stamp in employment, which affects in particular such things as sickness benefit.

b. Pension schemes. At present women suffer great differences with men on contributions and thus amounts of pension received.

#### 6. IMPROVED PROVISION OF LOCAL AUTHORITY DAY NURSERIES, FREE OF CHARGE, WITH EXTENDED HOURS TO SUIT WORKING MOTHERS. PROVISION OF NURSERY CLASSES IN DAY NURSERIES. MORE DAY NURSERIES.

a. 5 million women have dependent children under the age of 5. Most of whom are looked after by child-minders.

b. in 1949 there were 903 local authority day nurseries

in 1970 there were 453 local authority day nurseries

In Nottingham at present there are 302 nursery places PLUS 305 on the waiting list.

In Islington there are approx. 200 nursery places PLUS 500 on the waiting list.

Ø. 18 WEEKS MATERNITY LEAVE WITH FULL NETT PAY BEFORE AND AFTER BIRTH  
IF THE CHILD IS STILLBORN. NO DISMISSAL DURING PREGNANCY OR MATERNAL  
LEAVE. NO LOSS OF SECURITY, PENSION OR PROMOTION PROSPECTS

Maternity benefit now stands at £16, there is no securing of return to  
work as it is generally accepted that if you have a child then you leave  
work.

8. FAMILY PLANNING CLINICS SUPPLYING FREE CONTRACEPTION TO BE EXTENDED  
TO COVER EVERY LOCALITY. FREE ABORTION TO BE READILY AVAILABLE

Law fails to recognise that it is every womans right to control her own  
body.

1967 Abortion Act states:

1. Two doctors (usually men) must sign a form saying that they genuinely  
believe:
  - a) continuing the pregnancy would involve a risk to your life or to the  
physical or mental health of the woman or any children the woman may have  
and that this risk would be greater than the risk involved in ending the  
pregnancy or
  - b) that there is a substantial risk that if the child were born it would  
be seriously handicapped.
2. The Abortion must be carried out in a Nat. Health Hospital within 28 weeks.

The James White Bill presently being discussed states:

- a) Women will have to prove that having a child would present a 'grave  
danger' to their lives, or seriously injury to their mental or physical  
health.
  - b) Abortion has to be within 20 weeks.
- In furture all abortions will be illegal and doctors performing them  
guilty unless the can prove that the circumstances of the patient conforms  
to the new criteria.
- c) Women will have to be a British subject to get an abortion
  - d) Restricts agencies etc giving information on where to get an abortion

9. FAMILY ALLOWANCES TO BE INCREASED TO £2.50p per CHILD, INCLUDING  
THE FIRST CHILD

At present the family allowance stands at 90p for the second child  
and £1.00 for every child after that.