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WORKERS FIGHT

INTERNAL BULLETIN NO. 31

AUGUST 1975

DOCUMENTS FOR 1975 CONFERENCE

Political Perspectives for Britain - reprinted with amendments

Organisation report - reprinted with sub-editing from April NC minutes

"Thesis 41" - resolution of January 1973 WF special conference on the Fourth International - reprinted as background for conference discussion on FI.

Regroupment and the situation of the revolutionary left (Re-drafts of two paras. of this still to come)

Marxism and Womens Liberation (reprinted with amendments)

Proposed re-draft of Constitution

Economic Perspectives (Second Part: background in IB 25)

Engineering Fraction report

Some remarks on rank and file movements..., by Andrew Hornung. (The final section of this document is not included in this bulletin. It will be submitted to the 9th August NC.)

DRAFT POLITICAL PERSPECTIVES for Britain.

1. The background to the political scene of the coming year is obviously that of the present economic crisis facing British capitalism. It will be this crisis and its development which determines the actions of the ruling class and thus the sort of policies we are likely to see being put forward by the Labour Government. In what sense, these perspectives are inextricably inter-linked with the Economic Perspectives.

Steep levels of inflation have affected nearly all the major capitalist countries in the past year, and Britain in particular has experienced a very high level of inflation. This, unlike in many other countries, shows little sign of decreasing, and is continuing to put British capitalists at a great disadvantage vis a vis the capitalists of other countries. Their solution to this, as always, is attempt to shift the burden onto the back of the working class by attacking their living standards and by reducing their real wage levels.

2. The last Tory Government attempt to do just this by a statutory Incomes Policy floundered eventually on the rocks of the militancy and intransigency of the miners. Not only had the Tories earned the hostility of the vast mass of rank and file workers, but also their 'tough' approach to the unions had alienated the union bureaucrats, the principal group who could have demobilised any activity against the Tories.

3. Learning from these mistakes, and indeed being carried to power precisely on a repudiation of these Tory union bashing policies, the Labour Government have attempted to sugar the pill of wage restraint with the Social Contract. Thus, in return for what the government saw as being 'restrained' wage increases pursued voluntarily, the working class was made vague promises of more 'social justice'. Central to the policy was close collaboration between the government and the union bureaucrats.

4. Although the Social Contract can claim some success in restraining the level of wage increases, it has manifestly failed to be sufficiently tough. Workers have seen the government rat on their promise of more social justice and have felt the increasing pressure of inflation on their standard of living. This has forced workers into direct conflict with the policies of the Labour Government - the most recent and most important example being that of the railwaymen in calling the first national strike since 1926.

5. For the Labour Government it would be very difficult to introduce a statutory incomes policy after the fate of the Tories. Also it would alienate their working class base and produce considerable tensions between themselves and their principal allies, the union bureaucrats. For these reasons such a policy would seem unlikely, even though it cannot be ruled out.

6. The most likely option, and the one that is being aired increasingly at the moment is to ~~persevere~~ persevere with the Social Contract, perhaps in a slightly revamped form, and at the same time let the effects of unrestrained unemployment dampen the combativity of the class. Coupled with this there is likely to be further drastic cuts in social expenditure.

7. Unemployment is already around the million mark and will rise sharply during the summer as people leave colleges and schools. So far the reaction to unemployment has been muted and has often taken nationalistic forms (a particular example being that of the textile industry). We must launch a WF national campaign around the question of unemployment, paying particular attention to the LPYS around the theme of Work or Full Pay. We need to begin now an thorough educational scheme on how to break down our general slogans on unemployment into concrete steps for particular industries (eg. no covering etc). We should also attempt to get the LPYS and other bodies to begin to organise amongst the unemployed, and to establish where possible Unemployed Workers Committees attached to Trades Councils.

8. Increasing redundancies will pose the question of nationalisation and Bennism. Often, rather than engage in a real fight over the question of redundancies, workers may simply appeal to the government for help. We relate to this by calling for nationalisation without compensation under workers control. We reject schemes for worker participation, whilst accepting that we may in some circumstances advocate tactical participation in such schemes.

Our basic position on these questions is summed up as follows:

- a. we reject and oppose all schemes which involve workers taking responsibility for the running of capitalism.
- b. we support the fight for workers' control as a part of the struggle of the working class to assert its independence and its own regulation of its own conditions. We recognise that "workers' control" separated from the fight for workers' power can only slide into schemes of participation.
- c. in relation to redundancies and short time working, we advocate that workers fight for control over the situation. This means:
 - p opposing redundancies, demanding work or full pay, reduced hours without loss of pay, workers' control over any reorganisation of production entailed by such reduced hours.
 - where redundancies go through despite resistance, demanding rank and file union control over who goes.
 - no covering for voluntary redundancies
 - demanding guarantee pay despite short time working
 - demanding workers' scrutiny of all employers' proposals for short time working.
- d. the logical and frequently-used weapon against redundancies is the occupation. We fight for workers to take control of factories and retain that control while demanding nationalisation without compensation (ie. the state to take over financial responsibility), without accepting any responsibility for "profitability", "viability" or "competivity". We criticize the policy of isolated workers' cooperatives (as at Meriden) as ultimately leading to class collaboration and the isolation of the workers involved from the labour movement.
- e. instead of government or "impartial" inquiries, we demand workers' inquiries into every aspect of the bosses' plans, in all their financial and state connections.

"Bennism" is in fact a programme of technocratic state capitalism, spiced with populist demagogy. Moreover, Benn is not even prepared to fight seriously for the implementation of his programme.

However, some Bennite policies, such as disclosure of information, can, in the hands of militants, become real issues of class struggles.

We support nationalisation. Instead of handouts, we demand outright nationalisation without compensation. When enterprises are nationalised "cold" from on top, we demand a workers' veto over management and press for a workers' congress in that industry; we oppose joining management-worker boards.

We support the maximum disclosure of business information to workers and trade unions. We stress, however, the need for full disclosure of information and the fact that workers should not tailor their demands to the limits of this or that bankrupt employer.

As regards "workers on the board", our attitude is tactical. We recognise that no harmonious "workers' participation" in the running of capitalist enterprise is possible, except through the workers' representatives' being capitalist stooges. This can be seen in practice with, for example, the "worker directors" in the steel industry.

However we should not neglect opportunities to get information, to get real concessions from the employers, or to expose "management-worker" schemes from within through tactical participation in such schemes. Certain unalterable principles must however guide such tactics: no joint responsibility for the running of capitalist enterprise; workers' representatives to be directly elected, mandatable, recallable, and to make full report-backs, respecting no agreements to secrecy.

9. Public service cuts are already well under way and will become more severe. Crossland's recent speech announcing that the party's public spending is over has not been contradicted by anyone in the Labour Government, and we should see in the autumn further cuts in education, health service, aid to councils etc. Already the Child Poverty Action Group have announced that the proposed increases in social security and family allowances that will take place in the autumn are so small as to amount to a cut in benefit similar to that which took place in the thirties. We should argue for the restoration of the cuts that have been made so far, and also a sliding scale of public expenditure. While recognising the danger in forwarding schematic and abstract demands for the formation of a Public Sector Alliance, we should point out that these cuts affect all workers, particularly those in the public sector. We should also be alert and seize upon those real possibilities that will come our way to build alliances between different sections of public sector workers in their fight against the effects of the cuts. Our main thrust against the cuts should be to call for the restoration of cuts, a sliding scale of public expenditure, and resistance to the effects of any cuts on workers living conditions and levels of employment."

10. All these measures which look like being carried out by the Labour Government will obviously cause dissatisfaction amongst LP rank and file and amongst Labour supporters outside of the party. Set against this, however, is the expectation of a large YES majority in the EEC referendum. This will undoubtedly strengthen the hand of the LP right-wing and 'moderates' and may result in the removal of Benn to a less influential post in the Cabinet.

The victory, or what will be seen as one, for the pro-Marketeters will certainly produce confusion and demoralisation amongst the Labour left and also amongst the anti-EEC sections of the working class.

11. As far as the Tories are concerned, the election of Thatcher and the removal of Heathmen from positions of power marks a shift to the right in the Tory party. However, the Tories seem to be in considerable disarray, particularly over economic policy. The swing to the Tories in the last local elections appear to be a product more of the dissatisfaction and consequent abstention of Labour supporters than an actual swing to the Tories. Since then the moderate wing of the party seems to have re-asserted itself a little, and people such as Carr are now resurrecting the old Heath slogan of a Government of National Unity. (GNU).

12. A GNU is not likely though given the hostility of the majority of the LP to such a suggestion. However, the pro-EEC campaign of the LP has appeared to strengthen the links between the 'moderates' of both parties. What therefore seems possible is that, although we may see people crossing the floor of the House or trying to set up a Tavernite party of the centre, the policies adopted by the Labour Government as outlined earlier will receive some sort of backing from the Tories. Thus there may be developed as an answer to the economic crisis the same sort of bi-partisan approach that has occurred over the Irish crisis. Of course, the common ground won't be so great as it was over Ireland, but there will be substantial agreement over the use of market mechanisms and cuts in public expenditure.

13. As the Labour Government moves to the right and perhaps achieves some measure of agreement with the Tories, disillusionment in Labour is likely to become more wide-spread with workers seeking to redress their grievances through direct action. In the coming autumn-winter period increasing struggles will occur over the question of redundancies and short-time working. These will probably take ~~the~~ the most militant forms in previously prosperous and well-organised industries, particularly the car industry. As ever, therefore, we need to keep our major orientation towards the direct industrial struggle of the working class, and at the same time to strengthen our members on the shop-floor both numerically (we need to re-affirm the policy of colonisation) and politically (hence the need for educationals on unemployment and the fight against it).

Despite the feebleness of the 'left' MPs, the government's moves to the right cannot fail to have an impact inside the Labour Party.

Though a sharpening of conflict between Right and Left is not certain, and though, if such sharpening occurs, the initiative will probably be taken by the Right, we must relate to the possibility.

We face two dangers: Opportunism ('Labour to power with a socialist programme' - trype approach, "Reinstate Benn", presenting the left as fundamentally better than the Right); and sectarianism and economism (confining ourselves to relating to direct action, failing to relate to the question of government). Concretely, sectarianism is the more likely danger for us.

We must deply ~~an~~ integrated chain of transitional demands, relating to the questions of the general running of society. Key items should include sliding scale of wages; work or full pay; opening the books and workers' inquiries (into all the financial and state connections, not just into individual bankrupt companies); nationalisation without compensation; sliding scale of public expenditure; no incomes policy under capitalism; withdraw troops from Ireland; scrap all immigration acts; withdraw from NATO; full implemenatation of equal pay and equal opporrunities for women; hands off the unions.

We pose these demands to the labour government, demanding that it break with the bourgeoisie and implement such demands. We continue, of course, to explain clearly the capitalist nature of the government and the primacy of direct action.

We relate to the 'left' by calling on them to take up a vigorous fight for their own proclaimed policies eg. on nationalisation (where those policies are not simply reactionary eg. import controls) and for the demands we propose. We call on the 'Left' to organise ^{the} rank and file on the basis of a programme relating to the real needs of the working class to maintain their living standards and calling on the Government to make a break with the CBI and the Tory and Liberal Parties, which do not base themselves on the labour movment.

We conduct vigorous propoganda for an organised left-wing rank and file movement in the Labour Party. Such propoganda would have to avoid falling into schemaxinongering (as with the use of the slogan 'build the revolutionary party' as a panacea). However, the whole general political situation puts such a development on the agenda as a possibility for the next few years.

14. Finally it would seem that the anti-EEC campaign, whatever the result of the referendum, will strengthen the chauvinism of the British working class and probably give a boost both to the Scottish and Welsh nationalist movements. Scotland has also been a tremendous wave of struggles in the past year, centred on Glasgow. The SNP has also been given strength by the discovery of Scottish oil - a factor which seems to have affected the whole of the Scottish political spectrum.

Apparently, all the Scottish parties, with the exception of the Tories, are growing quite rapidly, with the SNP winning in the race for the highest growth rate. There is a strong possibility that the SNP may become within the next year the strongest political party in Scotland. The upsurge in Scottish industrial militancy combined with an increasing nationalistic militancy is something to which we should pay more attention (and look towards the establishmant of a Glasgow branch).

Over the last year the group has necessarily emphasised the organisation of LP work. In doing so, industrial work and the industrial organisation and intervention of the group has suffered relative to LP work, and despite having a greater priority has not received anywhere near a greater amount of attention. We must therefore proceed with the reorganisation of the industrial factions and strengthen then the role of the Industrial Organiser and the Industrial Sub-Committee. We should organise more schools to help our cds in industry to function better both as TU militants and WF members, and ensure that the re-organised fractions meet on a regular basis."

ORGANISATION DOCUMENT FROM APRIL NATIONAL COMMITTEE

1) Total membership at the time of the report was 25% students and 72% trade unionists. About 60% of the group is active in LP and LPYS and we have the dominant influence in 5 YS branches. Other main areas of work beside TU work are TOM, WWC, students.

2) PRIORITIES

i) There is a lack of integration in the work of the group - "Each activity is seen as something in itself, not as part of the process of building the group."

ii) In a section of the reply to the DCF we try to analyse the objective roots of the groups problems. As regards our subjective action, we would argue that the key thing is to tie education in with activity. With a higher level of political consciousness, many of our present organisational problems would simply be solved by comrades in their day to day work; without a higher general level of political consciousness, the most ingenious organisational solutions will be of only temporary value. Whether comrades can link their detailed work with our overall aim depends not on whether they have a knowledge of dialectics, but whether they properly understand our aims and methods.

iii) The proposal, "before embarking on any activity we need to consider ...what's in it for 'F'" is in general obviously to the point. But taken too far it directly contradicts the first point. If our activities are seen as integrated into an overall process, it does not make much sense to look at one demo (for example) ~~xxx xxx~~ by itself and ask 'whats in it for us'.

iv) DS's proposal to the NC says "There are three annual events which require...mobilisation through the group as priority one...IT aggregate, IPYS Conference, and R&F (IS) Conference". Apart from the fact that IS R&F will certainly not be yearly and very possibly may cease to happen altogether, we would agree that we need to plan for these events. However, it would be criminal to see our work as focussed and planned round these three yearly events.

v) Any attempt to give priorities in the form of a strict list is a bit artificial, if only because different areas interlink and effect each other. Taking the point about lack of structure in our work, however it may be worth giving a list, even at the risk of artificiality.

1. Industrial work

2. LPYS work, and secondarily IP

3. Irish solidarity work. This occupies high priority not because of the value of TOM as an area of recruitment - which is pretty small - but because of the objective importance of the issue. Indeed, we should constantly seek fruitful openings for work outside TOM. However, given that a lot of the forces which can be mobilised for solidarity actions are outside the LP and outside our areas of industrial work, it would be an abdication of our responsibility to the Irish struggle to confine our work on the Irish issue to the LP, unions etc. We must work to build TOM; miserable though it is the main focus for action giving some aid to the Irish struggle.

4. Work in the women's movement, specifically at present in the Working Womens Charter Campaign and raising the question in all areas of our work.

5. Student work

6. Work directed towards other groups - attending meetings etc.

7. Anti-fascist work

Chile solidarity work should, in our opinion, be an extremely low priority: basically something we only carry out for cynical reasons of possible gains in contacts and recruits. The Chile solidarity campaign represents, not an active struggle against our ruling class to give practical support to a living struggle, but a pious, ineffectual indulgence of social-democratic sympathy for a struggle which is dead for now.

vi) As an essential pre-condition for all these outward directed activities, we must have our own internal structure:

Paper and publications
conference, leading committees
internal education
branch, fraction, and region meeting

3) Industrial work
see separate document

4) Education

i) Key to our educational work, as we have often argued, is a range of simple clear pamphlets giving our positions on important issues (in style of EEC pamphlet). CW in Bristol now reckons that he can produce one of these at the rate of one every two months. In addition to the industrial pamphlets mentioned later, the following should be priorities:

The Labour Party and Direct Action
Rank and File Programme
Womens Liberation
Ireland
TOM
Fascism
Workers Self-Defence

DG and DS are also preparing a pamphlet on 'Militant' to be published in duplicate form.

In addition to all these, we need a magazine at least quarterly, if necessary duplicated in the provinces.

ii) We assume that the 'concentric circles' can be validly interpreted as a small group basis as well as strictly one to one.

iii) Given that, the major point that comes out of the questionnaire returns - the special problems of M/C aside is:

'What does concentric circles mean for a branch of 3 or 4 people?
Not very much inside the branch - the important thing is the relation of the branch to the national leadership. Thus the key thing we have to do in terms of concentric circles is?

- make sure that the NC becomes a real political school.
- integrate leading comrades from branches without NC members

iv) We noted above the need to knit the group together through concerted national actions. National education day schools are part of this. We should have schools like those on Ireland and on Womens liberation at the rate of about six a year.

We also note the importance of our national conference as a focus for education.

v) To co-ordinate pamphlets, educational programmes etc. and simply to chivy branches, we need a national educational organiser. BH has volunteered.

vi) We must acknowledge that education is a two-way process. We need to encourage educational groups to produce a) regular articles for paper and magazine b) pamphlets.

5. Internal

i) In the first Secretariat minutes (17-12-74) we defined the functions of the Sec. as follows:

Agreed that the precise relationship between the functioning of the Secretariat and of the SC would have to evolve in practice and be defined by experience. Goal should be to relieve SC of all administrative decisions and see that the SC decisions are implemented in all their ramifications, including points not discussed by the SC. This of course could only be within the guidelines laid down by the SC meeting weekly and the NC meeting monthly. Henceforth, the SC will function more as a political committee than it has been able to previously. It will be the responsibility of the Secretariat and of the Secretary specifically, to ensure that the SC meetings and NC meetings are properly prepared...

ii) In practice the division of labour between the Sec. and the SC has worked out pretty well (whatever the other shortcomings of the SEC). The SC's functioning has become more political.

iii) Much of time of the NC is still occupied with organisational matters of little political importance. Partly this is because of the lack of a properly constituted Control Commission, a lack which must be remedied at the next Conference.

iv) We are strongly opposed to the idea of the NC DOING detailed organisation. At best this would mean the NC was substituting for the shortcomings - no doubt real - of the Secretariat. Even then it couldn't work because the NC would have to rely on the Secretariat to carry out its decisions. But worse, the political discussions we need so much would be squeezed out of the NC.

v) The lack of sufficiently extensive political discussion on the NC is one of the worst problems of the group, in fact. The political line of the group thus tends to be worked out in informal discussions between comrades at the centre, and rarely properly discussed by the rest of the organisation. We must turn the NC very firmly towards discussing the political issues of the class struggle.

vi) We do not propose any change in the present structure of the regions and branches.

vii) At the centre, we need at least:

1. a team to produce the paper;

2. a Secretariat;

3. a team to produce the magazine and educational material. At present this does not exist.

viii) This shortfall was already pointed out at the 1973 Conference. In fact, however, we have no more fulltimers and no more resources at the centre than we had then. Our efficiency does improve and we do produce more. But the fact is that - struggle as we may, and we will struggle - we shall fall short of the magazine/pamphlet requirements until we have more resources.

ix) We approve the Secretariat decision to circulate Secr. and SC material to non-NC local organisers (cf. 4.iii) at the discretion of the Secretary.

x) The lack of centralisation (both in terms of general information and political activity) is a crippling factor in the overall working of the group. One of the main ways to overcome this is to train branch organisers to operate more efficiently.

To this effect, notes will be distributed giving instructions and education on the role and functioning of branch organisers. A school on this subject will be arranged.

6. Troops Out Movement.

We should continue to work in TOM on the lines already laid out (see WF report on last TOM conference) while keeping our eyes open for alternative possibilities of work (relief committees etc.)

7. Paper sales.

i) Our circulation has not improved materially since 1972 Conference, though our membership has just about doubled.

ii) We need a better circulation: a) for financial reasons; b) simply to spread our ideas further. This must be done seriously, in a planned way, with the aim of building a political base for the group in the areas where papers are sold.

iii) The replies to the questionnaire on paper sales were so vague (or in some cases non-existent) that it is not possible to give detailed plans for extending paper sales except by sucking figures out our thumbs, a method convincingly proved ineffective in the past.

iv) We instruct the Secretariat to appoint a national Paper Sales organiser with the duty of working out detailed plans for expanding sales and of enforcing them.

8. Work directed at other groups: IS, IMG, WRP, etc.

i) Our inadequacies in this sphere have been shown by us being so out of touch with major developments inside these groups (Tendency A, Tendency D, WSL split etc) and the way we have been reduced to comic-opera diplomacy with small groups who have "retired hurt" from the struggle inside the bigger organisations (IS-LO, RMC etc.)

ii) Key here is the magazine and pamphlets.

iii) The Secretariat should carry out the task entrusted to it of producing serious documentation of the present state of the major revolutionary left groups. It should also produce a brief educational pamphlet outlining in 3 or 4 pages our major differences with those groups.

9. LPYS Work

i) The questionnaire shows serious weakness in London. This is a big factor in the lack of drive nationally. It must be corrected.

ii) The paper is still not very much integrated with our LPYS work. We should propose to the editorial board a regular 'LPYS' column in the paper, and encourage comrades to write reports from their YSs to it.

iii) We do not believe we are yet at the stage of being able to launch meaningful national campaigns in the LPYS. We should keep our eyes and minds open, however, We are probably at the stage where, if the Shrewsbury 24 were arrested now rather than in February 1973, we could build some sort of campaign round it in the LPYS.

iv) There should be a LP organiser, to concentrate on LP work, to keep track of regional meetings and conferences as well as general LP work, and ensure that decisions are implemented and information gathered.

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(Resolution of WF Special Conference on the Fourth International, January 1973)

1. Our primary task, the one we can actually apply ourselves to now, is to build a revolutionary communist organisation in the British working class.
2. Essential to that task is a whole programme of theoretical research and self-development, necessarily taking the form of an assessment and re-assessment of the whole of Trotskyism since 1940, including its USFI mainstream. This is ^{is} not theoretical scepticism, nor a declaration of 'open season' on the history and traditions of the movement, either before or after 1951. We explicitly declare our adherence to the traditions of Trotskyism and affirm that, all legitimate criticisms granted, no other fully revolutionary tendency, advocating the full programme of proletarian emancipation and the establishment of states on the model of the Paris Commune and the post-October Soviets, has existed for half a century. Any advance will be on the basis of that record, tradition, political codification and analysis. But the unsatisfactory and inadequate nature of the movement for 25 years now, displaying all the features of an inner collapse of doctrine and consequent attempt to relate to the world by way of chameleonism and adaptation, has its roots in a series of unresolved theoretical problems.

The current public division in the USFI on Vietnam - i.e. on the major question (Stalinism) where adequate re-analysis and the integration of that analysis into Trotskyist doctrine has been the central problem of post-war Trotskyism - is a graphic expression of this: at bottom it is a programmatic division. The apparently very real prospect of a new split (SWP, Canada, Australia, India) has fundamentally the same significance as has the coexistence within the USFI of a very wide range of political practices, in no sense arising only from application of similar programme and principles to different circumstances. The building of revolutionary parties (and therefore the FI) demands a critical re-working of our history, given that the 'working' so far has led to confusion, zig-zags, and near chaos. This necessitates distance from and open and public criticism of the USFI.

3. The element of 'support' for the USFI in our position is that it is the mainstream issuing from the historical tendency of which we are a part; the element of criticism is in all the foregoing, and also in the implications for our own practice of USFI discipline, which would be utterly destructive.
4. The USFI British section is an unstable quasi-Bordigist sect, whose role in British revolutionary politics has been rarely other than harmful with the exception of its solidarity work, such as in VSC and on Ireland. Even here it was a substitute for building a revolutionary party in the British labour movement, and was the opportunist side of the coin of the SLL's criminally sectarian refusal of solidarity work with the Vietnamese.

It represents insufficient forces in an absolute sense and specifically in its weight within the working class (WF, $\frac{1}{4}$ its size, has scarcely less weight) to justify entering it to join in the factional scum to fight for our politics. Better, more fruitful, more constructive - and immensely more healthy - work can be done outside the USFI British section. Indeed, remaining outside is a precondition for its being done. The IMG is an intellectual discussion club lacking even intellectual interest: its brightest 'insights' would, in a mature organisation, merit an hour's discussion and the recommendation of a booklist. The IMG, inseparable from the organisation of the USFI, makes, by what it is, any affiliation and acceptance of USFI discipline unthinkable. By its ultra factional attitude, its understanding of the value to it of the exclusive USFI 'franchise', it has and will deliberately make any informal organisational relationship impossible.

No organisation relationship with the USFI is feasible, therefore. In any case we

must face the fact that the IMG is not meaningfully separable from the USFI. The fact that the British section is as it is cannot be seen apart from the considerations in (2).

5. The positive side of this is that we therefore have no prohibition on relations with tendencies such as L.O.

6. We relate to the USFI primarily politically - dialogue, discussion, criticism, exchange of material (if possible: it is unlikely that it will be possible. Though they demand of us that we join, they refuse to give us the documents for the 10th World Congress - thus exposing the arid organisational fetishism which is an essential part of their approach, and at the root of self-glorifying ideas such as epistemological centralisation). We maintain the ideological orientation, the rejection of the myths of the anti-"Pabloites", which we made in 1969.

7. The declaration of critical support, which has been our position hitherto, is taken generally as primarily an organisational support. It is exploited as such by the IMG, with which we compete politically and therefore organisationally. This is both misleading and embarrassing, and therefore we should make a full and public explanation of our position and then drop the essentially meaningless declaration of critical support from the Where We Stand column of WF. We must fight for the regeneration and development of the Fourth International, recognising the USFI as the mainstream of post-Trotsky Trotskyism.

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This is published as background to the NC and Conference discussion on the FI. Comrades are also urgently asked to re-read the pamphlet "Workers Fight and the Fourth International", especially the sections on the USFI and on "Regeneration".

Note: Paras 5 & 7 were rejected & referred for redrafting.

Draft Document on REGROUPMENT AND THE SITUATION ON THE REVOLUTIONARY LEFT

1. Since the present radicalisation began, about 1967, the general course of the larger revolutionary groups has not been to slough off their previous errors, to learn and revive themselves in the rising class struggle; on the contrary, the general tendency (with exceptions) has been political deterioration. The faults of the '60s have been more sharply outlined: IS's tail-ending conception of the party, the WRP's hysterical opportunism and deep-seated adaptation to social democracy, Militant's reformism, IMG's chameleonism (though the record has been more complex in this latter case). The recent line-up over the EEC referendum was the sharpest indication of the situation.

The major groups have not been growing very fast, with the possible exception of the Militant. WRP, IS, and IMG all have a very large turnover. In fact there appears to be a vicious circle: a large turnover leads to failure to grow quickly, which leads to opportunist political lurching from position to position, which in turn contributes to high turnover.

The opportunism generally takes a rightist colouring. This is true at present also of the IMG, despite its previous ultra-leftism.

2. There has been a lot of "fraying at the edges" of the larger groups. The WRP has lost the 'Bulletin' and the WSL. The IMG has lost the RMC and the LSA. The IS has given rise to the RCG, the Tearsite grouping, and the former Left Opposition.

This cluster of small groupings is not at all healthy. With the exception of the LSA, which appears to have a relatively clear political basis, albeit one we would disagree with, they are generally ideologically parasitic on the larger groups, sometimes in the form of thoughtlessly negating them. Many are/were no better politically than their parent groups.

3. Inside the larger groups, also, there is generally considerable discontent. The IMG is caught up in dead-end factionalism of the sort described by J P Cannon in "The First Ten Years of American Communism". Two major tendencies, under various names (now Tendency A and Tendency B), have been at loggerheads continuously for three years; but over those three years it is impossible to trace one single clear line of political polarisation. The IS, despite an increasing choking of internal life, has two organised oppositions. About the internal life of the WRP or the Militant we know much less.

4. A big realignment on the revolutionary left is not on the present agenda, because of the lack of a sizeable and politically competent force to act as a centre for it. We ourselves are at present not big enough to play such a role. The immediate prospect is therefore for a continuation of the lack of rapid growth and the criminal wastage through the 'turnover' of the larger groups. The CP, and any revived Labour left current, stand to benefit.

5. Our immediate opportunity is to recruit energetically from among the revolutionary left - among mainstream elements as well as among 'displaced persons'. We will of course not accomplish the qualitative transformation necessary to give us hegemony on the revolutionary left just by such one-by-one recruitment; a whole process of splits and regroupments will be needed, in which we break off whole tendencies from groups like IS and IMG. However, to wait around for the big bonanza would be useless; here and now we can do a great deal in one-by-one recruitment (and thus make ourselves better able to accomplish future fusions and regroupments).

6. The IMG is showing increased signs of interest in work in the Labour Party. They have been doing this on and off since about 1972. However, the increased polarisation in the LP may well attract attention from revolutionary left groups: and it should act as an incitement to us to involve ourselves more energetically, with a realistic

perspective of building ourselves as the serious challenger to the Militant in the LPYS.

We have therefore to combine three aspects: industrial work, which, although the first political priority, will not yield many recruits in the short term; winning new people, developing independent initiatives, and training our own comrades in the LPYS; and attracting people already involved in the revolutionary left, through straight propaganda work and through our work in the various left united fronts (TOM, WWC, Anti-fascist committees etc: these are of course also important in themselves and as links with the LPYS work).

7. The Open Letter was basically valid, despite our failure with the LO and the RMC. We never thought we could completely stop the scattering of little groups on the revolutionary left. We never aimed to act as general conciliators and preachers of unity, at the expense of our own independent politics. We merely hoped to save some of the forces which would otherwise be wasted in creating yet more futile sectlets. That we failed in two cases does not prove that the effort was not valid. In any case, the Open Letter brought us a whole number of new individual contacts; and by no means 'on false pretences', because we really do stand by the politics expressed in the Open Letter.

8. The LO was a group of people, politically miscellaneous and held together only by cliquism and the fact that they were all going out of IS. Logically their ideas were reactionary: they were redeemed only by the fact that they didn't know what they were talking about. They clung together until the combined pressure of ourselves and the RCG broke them up, and subsequently most of them have gone - in complete disregard of any politics they claimed to have - to the WSL or the INC. Nevertheless, they included some potentially useful people, and we were right to pay some attention to them, though in the end the effort expended on them was infinitely more than they were worth. In hindsight, we should have approached them more in a spirit of "join WF" than "regroupment", because the "regroupment" label only helped to boost their noxious and nonsensical self-importance.

9. The RMC is a more intellectually coherent grouping - in terms of formal political positions they are very close indeed to WF. The malignant factor was the dialectic of coterie politics: Marshall and the RMC people each pandered to and helped to build each other's prejudices, fears, hesitations, grumbles. The umbrella 'regroupment' gave them and our partial acquiescence in using Marshall as an intermediary helped in this. In this case as with the LO, however, it is not certain that anything we could have done would have changed their course fundamentally.

10. We were not blind to what the LO and RMC were like. We failed, however, to draw conclusions rigorously enough; in practice, in our allocation of resources, we ended up stressing organisational manoeuvres to the harm of our basic propaganda work. We also ended up being preoccupied with the "fraying edges" to the harm of serious attention to the mainstream of the larger groups. None of this shows that the regroupment effort was invalid; it shows we applied it badly, and on refractory material, in those cases.

11. Generally we have failed to conduct sufficiently consistent polemic. Our attention to the larger groups has been in the form of sporadic broadsides rather than persistent, careful argument. (This relates closely to our general problems about cadre-building). In our relations with dissidents, we have had all the disadvantages of 'diplomacy' (fuss about details) without the advantages (being able to cultivate a friendly relation and win people over gradually).

12. In conclusion: (a) We should retain the use of the Open Letter and the regroupment call, while being clear on the need for tactical intelligence in using it in specific circumstances. (b) We should assess each grouping coming close to us concretely, as to the degree and type of 'diplomacy' to use etc. This is not a question of being cynical about regroupment. We are genuinely in favour of fusing tendencies on a democratic basis, learning from others, etc. We are not in favour of wasting our time chasing after little cliques.

(c) We must reassert the vital role of the magazine, the need for 'position papers', the need to relate properly to the mainstream of other left groups in propaganda.

(d) we should pay more attention to the WRP.

1. Marxists see the working class as the most revolutionary class in history because the working class has no interest in oppression. That is why the workers' revolution can be the first revolution that is really for freedom, not just for the freedom of a new set of exploiters to exploit.

But for the working class to be a revolutionary class, it is necessary that the working class should be conscious of itself as a world revolutionary class. As long as male workers fail to fight against the oppression of women, they are not revolutionary.

Only by mobilising "the slaves of the slaves" and taking up their demands can the working class prepare itself to overturn the old order.

2. Marxism, however, is not an abstract moralistic blueprint for social reconstruction, but the conscious scientific expression of actual material development. Our demands are effective only if they correspond to the real movement of history, the real dynamic of the class struggle; not if they simply reflect a moral revolt against capitalist conditions. The demands for the emancipation of women must, therefore, be considered in their actual historical relation to the class struggle.

3. Lenin and Trotsky insisted, correctly, that there was no such thing in history as "proletarian culture". Under capitalism, the working class is a slave class, deprived of the leisure, the education, and the material means necessary to develop an independent culture. After the overthrow of capitalism, the cultural tasks of the working class prior to the growth of a classless socialist culture amount to the assimilation of what is best in bourgeois culture.

Trotsky was referring specifically to 'culture' in the sense of literature and the arts. His argument applies with double force, however, to the most conservative sphere of social life, the norms of personal and domestic behaviour. Any thought of socialist norms of behaviour developing under the overwhelming counter-pressures of capitalist society is sheer utopianism.

Political consciousness, however, is far more volatile and changeable than norms of personal behaviour are. Even while remaining deeply marked in their personal behaviour by the oppression and alienation of capitalist society, millions of workers can and will rapidly come to realise that their only way forward is through uniting as a class, kicking out the capitalists, and reorganising society on a collectivist basis. The possibility of revolution consists in precisely this fact.

4. Even after the workers' revolution, the liberation of women will not be automatic -- it will require a conscious struggle. The workers' revolution does not immediately introduce a communist society, but rather a society "in every respect, economically, morally and intellectually, still stamped with the birth marks of the old society from whose womb it emerges".

Before the workers' revolution, while capitalist conditions still continue, important reforms certainly can be won towards the liberation of women: their scope, however, is limited, and they are constantly being counteracted by capitalist attacks. The decay of capitalism deals its heaviest blows to the woman as a wage-earner and as a housewife. Any perspective of women's liberation separated from the socialist revolution is, therefore, a hopeless perspective, a blind alley.

5. Practical conclusions for the work of the revolutionary communist organisation must be drawn from these observations. Certainly it is true that every communist must strive to behave as a communist in every sphere of his or her life, including in personal and domestic relations. Certainly the organisation must attempt to give its assistance to comrades in this respect. It is impossible, however, for Marxists to be satisfied with the bland attitude that ranks the task of reforming personal behaviour alongside the task of intervening in the class struggle and says, simply, "both are important".

Either we give priority to one task, or to the other, and in either case practical consequences follow. To give priority to the task of reforming personal behaviour is clearly to reduce the organisation to a moralistic cult of people who pose as extreme revolutionaries, but who, in practice, have not the slightest chance of making any contribution to actually achieving revolution.

If our work is to be in tune with the real movement of history, we must give priority to the tasks of intervening in the class struggle. It follows that those tasks define membership in the organisation. Personal relations must be subordinate to political tasks; personal relations must first and foremost be 'businesslike'; personal likes and dislikes which inevitably arise in the course of common work must be subordinated to political decisions and political tasks. The organisation will do all it can do without harm to its political work in order to assist comrades in their personal lives. But clearly the problems and troubles which life in capitalist society creates are so widespread and severe that, if the organisation should once decide that the job of sorting those out should be allowed to rank with intervention in the trade unions and Labour Party, distribution of the paper, mobilisation for demonstrations, etc., in our priorities, then the logic of that decision would quickly drag us down into a swamp of inward-looking attempts to patch up the cracks of capitalist society. If we are practical communists we must be "callous" enough to decide otherwise.

Any revolutionary communist organisation — any real-life revolutionary communist organisation, that is, as opposed to dreams which may exist in the heads of moralistic socialists — will contain selfish, mean, arrogant, hypocritical, male-chauvinist individuals: individuals, in short, deeply marked by capitalism. Unfortunately, if we are to build the mass party we need to make the revolution, we must build it with people as they really are, not people as we hope they will be in a new society. The man or woman who is backward and brutalised in their domestic life, but prepared to work loyally for the revolutionary party, is our comrade; the man or woman who takes the greatest care to introduce "a little bit of socialism" into their domestic life, but abstains from the political struggle in the labour movement, is not.

To sum up: for the revolutionary organisation:

(a) Its aim is socialist revolution. This defines its programme and tasks. These define the basis for membership. The question of members' personal and domestic lives can only be discussed within this context. This means that they can only be of concern to the revolutionary communist organisation inasmuch as they contradict or hinder the fight for and implementation of its political programme.

(b) Given that the fight against the oppression of women is an essential part of our political programme, the fight against male chauvinist ideas and practices, both in the class and inside the organisation, must be seen as a necessary part of the fight for our political programme.

This fight, however, must go hand in hand with a recognition that any revolutionary communist organisation will contain individuals deeply marked by capitalism — it will have to be built with people as they really are, not as we hope they will be in a new society. This recognition, however, cannot imply acquiescence: it must provide the basis for a struggle to develop comrades. In relation to personal and domestic matters, this must be done according to section (a) above.

(c) The effect of putting the reform of personal and domestic behaviour over and above the fight for and implementation of our political programme would be to reduce the organisation to a moralistic cult of people who pose as extreme revolutionaries but who, in practice, have not the slightest chance of actually achieving revolution.

6. To become a communist is to dedicate oneself to the interests and the viewpoint of the international working class as a whole. It implies, therefore, a break from all sectionalism and parochialism. Unless the revolutionary communist party has achieved this overall view, it will be paralysed when it comes to the tasks of revolution. Lenin's conceptions on this point are summed up by Georg Lukacs:

"The Mensheviks... united in the party the most diverse interest groups, thus preventing any homogeneity of thought and action. During the chaotic melee of the class struggle — for all revolutionary periods are characterised by the deeply disturbed, chaotic state of society as a whole — instead of helping to establish the proletarian unity against the bourgeoisie so essential for victory, and of rallying other hesitant oppressed groups to the proletariat, a party so organised becomes a confused tangle of different interest groups. Only through inner compromise does it ever manage to take any action, and, even then, either follows in the wake of the more clear-minded or more instinctive groups within it, or remains forced to look on fatalistically while events pass it by."

The break from sectional attitudes is most important in the case of comrades from more prosperous sections of the population (members of imperialist nations, white people, petty bourgeois, skilled workers, males, etc.) It is also important, however, in the case of comrades from oppressed sections of the population. The nationalism of an oppressed nation is different from the nationalism of an oppressor nation; it is nevertheless an ideology opposed to communism. Likewise, it is necessary for women comrades to look at events from the point of view of the overall historic interests of the working class, not just from the sectional viewpoint of the interests of women.

7. Inside the revolutionary communist organisation, we favour women comrades organising their own caucuses, because that can help them gain self-confidence and help them sharpen their consciousness of their specific oppression, as women. The aim of such caucuses is, however, to enable women to take a full part in the organisation as equals — not to create a separate organisation for women. We oppose any attempts to separate "women's work" off from the work of the organisation as a whole. We oppose any attempt to put the authority of women's caucuses above the authority of the revolutionary communist organisation.

8. Our women comrades, therefore, should intervene in the women's movement as communists, not just as women's liberationists. The discipline of the organisation applies as fully to work in the women's liberation movement as it does to work in the Trade Union movement or in any other area. We reject mystical notions that only women can understand the oppression of women.

9. The rise of the women's liberation movement over recent years is a new development, a development from which communists can learn and have learnt much. It is not, however, the case that Marxists need to enter the movement as empty-handed spectators.

If we attempt to borrow our policy on the liberation of women piece-meal from the women's movement, we will be faced with a wide range of views, ranging from communist views to outright anti-communism. We will gain nothing except confusion. If, however, we attempt to develop policy on the basis of the theoretical arsenal of Marxism and Trotskyism, we will have a pretty serviceable basis for positive intervention. (It is a noticeable fact that all except the most extreme anti-communist tendencies in the women's movement have relied on some version of Marxism, more or less distorted, as basis for their analyses.)

An independent and definite standpoint does not stand in the way of learning from the Women's Liberation Movement; in fact, independent thinking and independent criteria are the precondition for such learning.

10. Moreover, we intervene in the Women's Liberation Movement not only on issues immediately and directly affecting women, but on the basis of our full programme; not only on nurseries or abortion, but on Ireland, on the sliding scale of wages, on workers' self-defence, etc. The approach that would confine the women's movement to "women's issues" is parochial. Certainly, we work sensitively in the women's movement, as in all our areas of work — but we reject any patronising ideas that some special softened or watered-down political programme is required for work in the women's movement.

Likewise, we raise the issues most directly concerning women not only in the Women's Liberation Movement, but in the Trade Union movement, in the Labour Party, in discussions with contacts; in short, throughout our work, in one form or another.

11. A good many of the activists in the Women's Liberation Movement are, if not fully developed Marxists, certainly sincere and serious socialists. It is up to us to work carefully with these women and to win them to our politics through common activity and persistent political discussion.

It is no service to those activists to shroud the real differences in the women's movement under the vague formulas of "sisterhood". Within the movement, there are those who campaign vigorously against the "male-dominated left", i.e. against revolution; there are those who advocate a unity, under the title of "sisterhood", between women of all classes; there are those who oppose an orientation to working class women; there are those who oppose women joining the trade unions; there are those who favour closed "consciousness-raising" groups; there are those who argue for the petty-bourgeois demand of "wages for housework". These tendencies represent, as we have argued above, a blind alley for the women's movement. It is our duty to oppose them. Unity of the women's movement -- i.e. unity with these tendencies -- is not an overriding principle for us.

The fate of the pre-world war I suffragette movement, with on the one hand Christobel Pankhurst combining demands for women's equality with right-wing politics in her 'Women's Party', and on the other hand Sylvia Pankhurst rallying to the banner of the October Revolution and the Communist International, is a microcosm of the historic destiny of the women's movement.

12. It is necessary to recognise that there has been a trend in WF to fall short of the elementary duties of an independent communist attitude to the women's movement, as enumerated above. This trend has shown itself in:

- opposition to aggressive national intervention in the women's movement;
- tendencies to separate women's work off from the rest of the work of WF;
- inward-looking tendencies, concentrating attention on reform of personal behaviour rather than political struggle (particularly evident in the first draft of the women's fraction resolution to the 1974 Aggregate);
- tendencies to put the authority of the women's movement above, or alongside, the authority of WF.

This trend* arose from inadequate education and centralisation in WF. Some women comrades, lacking clear education or direction in regard to work in the WLM, have adapted to that movement. Some male comrades, also, have adapted to the trend, the mechanism involved being simply this: that adaptation to such a trend is an easier way of satisfying guilt feelings in relation to male chauvinism than is a serious struggle for communist consciousness.

It is necessary, therefore:

- A) to educate ourselves in a communist attitude to the women's movement, the discussion round this resolution being the first step in such education;
- B) to ensure that policy in the women's movement is determined by the organisation as a whole, and its leading committees; the women's fraction to liaise closely with the NO and SC to this end.

12. In summary: we approach the liberation of women, as all other questions, with our methods -- the methods of irreconcilable class struggle and revolution, not of conciliation and reformist schemes.

First draft of a proposed new constitution for Workers' Fight.

PREAMBLE

Workers' Fight is a revolutionary socialist organisation, based on a definite programme, whose aim is the organisation of the working class in the struggle for power and the overthrow of the existing capitalist social order. All its activities, its methods and internal regime are subordinated to this aim and are designed to serve it.

Only a self-acting and critical-minded membership is capable of forging and consolidating such an organisation and of solving its problems by collective thought, discussion and experience. From this follows the need of assuring the widest party democracy in the ranks of the organisation.

The struggle for power organised and led by a revolutionary party is the most ruthless and irreconcilable struggle in all history. A loosely-knit, heterogeneous, undisciplined, untrained organisation is utterly incapable of succeeding in this task. A revolutionary organisation has to unconditionally demand from all its members complete discipline in all the public activities and actions of the organisation.

Leadership and centralized direction are indispensable prerequisites for any sustained and disciplined action, especially in an organisation that sees its aim as leading the collective efforts of the proletariat in the struggle against capitalism. Without a strong and firm leadership, having the power to act promptly and effectively in the name of the organisation and to supervise, coordinate and direct all its activities without exception, the very idea of a revolutionary organisation is a meaningless jest.

It is from these considerations, based upon the experience of international working-class struggle, that we derive the Leninist principle of organisation, namely democratic centralism. This principle is embodied in our Constitution and guides us in all our organisational activities.

1. MEMBERSHIP.

The fundamental condition for membership is proletarian class consciousness. Concretely this means that Workers' Fight members must:

- i) Agree with and be committed to defend the basic aims and programme of the organisation as laid down in "Where We Stand."
- ii) Engage in regular political activity under the discipline of the organisation.
- iii) Be a member of their appropriate trade union. If there is no trade union at a member's place of work then he or she must, if possible (from the point of view of victimisation etc.), attempt to form a union branch.
- iv) Sell Workers' Fight regularly, especially at their place of work, if this is possible.
- v) Commit themselves to developing an understanding of the theory and traditions of revolutionary communism, as laid down in the basic education programme, and the major political positions of the group as set out in "What we stand for."
- vi) Pay a regular subscription to the organisation as laid down by the Aggregate.
- vii) Any leave of absence agreed to by a members branch must be ratified by the Steering Committee or the National Committee.

viii) When members have political disagreements with the organisation these will not be used as an excuse for political inactivity or organisational disloyalty. If a member attempts to use political differences in such a way, then he is liable to be excluded from the organisation.

2. CANDIDATE MEMBERSHIP.

The conditions of membership must not only be adhered to by means of verbal agreement but also in reality. For this reason, new members will, as a general rule, be required to join Workers' Fight as candidate members. Any exception must, however, first of all be agreed to either by the Steering Committee or the National Committee.

- i) Candidate members have all the rights and duties of full members except that they do not have the right to vote, either at National or Branch level.
- ii) New members are admitted as candidate members either by the collective decision of the branch they join or by the National Committee.
- iii) Normally a candidate member is expected to go through the basic education programme with a full member of Workers' Fight, before being admitted to full membership.
- iv) Candidate members, once they have joined, must immediately see to it that they enter into educational discussion with a non-member of the organisation with a view to recruiting this person to Workers' Fight.
- v) There shall be no formal time limit on the period of candidate membership.
- vi) The National Committee has the power to reduce a candidate member to the rank of sympathiser after due warning if it regards his or her functioning in relation to the organisation as inadequate, unserious or undisciplined. One formal warning is the sufficient statutory requirement for this after which the National Committee has the right to act summarily according to its own judgement in the light of recommendations made by a local organiser or NC member. If such a procedure is set in motion then the candidate member concerned will receive due notification of it in a written statement from the NC outlining its reasons. The candidate member will have the right to appeal personally before the NC against the decision and the NC has the final say in the matter. A candidate member, unlike a full member, has no right to appeal against an NC decision before the aggregate.

3. FULL MEMBERSHIP

A candidate member who has satisfied his or her fellow comrades that he or she has fulfilled the conditions of membership shall become a full member.

- i) Full members shall be elected either by the branch or the NC.
- ii) Full members have a responsibility to play an active part in the decision making processes of the organisation through the various bodies which the group has established for this purpose.

4. NATIONAL AGGREGATE.

The National Aggregate is the supreme policy-making body of Workers' Fight.

- i) The national Aggregate shall be convened annually
- ii) Every full and candidate member has a right and a duty to attend and to speak.

- iii) Every member or group of members (e.g. branches, NC, fractions, factions) can submit resolutions and amendments to the aggregate.
- iv) Resolutions and amendments must be submitted in writing to the National Secretary before the date laid down in the Aggregate timetable.
- v) The Steering Committee is responsible for convening and arranging the aggregate.
- vi) Non-members can only attend by invitation of the NC or the Aggregate itself.
- vii) Minutes of the Aggregate must be produced and circulated to all members not more than one month after the Aggregate.

5. THE NATIONAL COMMITTEE

The National Committee is responsible for the overall political decision making of Workers' Fight in between Aggregates.

- i) The National Committee must be elected by the Aggregate and consist of twelve members and three alternates.
- ii) The NC will, as a general rule, be bound by the decisions of the aggregate. Changes in the objective situation are the only criteria for reversing aggregate decisions. If, in between aggregates, events occur that are thought by the NC to necessitate a change of line then the NC will have to account for this to the rest of the organisation.
- iii) The NC must meet monthly and every member of the NC is expected to be present. An alternate has the right to vote if an NC member is absent.
- iv) NC meetings will be prepared for and convened by the SC.
- v) Any member, branch, sub-committee, fraction or faction can submit a resolution to the NC. These must be sent to the National Secretary before the deadline for resolutions.
- vi) Every member of Workers' Fight can attend NC meetings apart from those sessions which the NC decides to make closed. Members cannot speak unless the NC gives them permission to do so.
- vii) The NC shall report as a whole to the aggregate. Minority reports can be given by NC members who are in disagreement with the NC majority.
- viii) Minutes of NC meetings shall be made available to all members of Workers' Fight.
- ix) Only the National Committee has the power to appoint or authorise the appointment of Workers' Fight National Officers.
- x) The National Committee or its duly authorised representatives (sub-committees, fractions or branches) has the power to give imperative directives which are absolutely binding on all full and candidate members.
- xi) Relations with other tendencies as such or with members of other tendencies shall be entirely under the control of the NC and those bodies or individuals appointed by the NC to conduct these relations.
- xii) The National Committee has the right to structure discussions within the organisation and end them when it thinks they have served their purpose for the group.

6. NATIONAL OFFICERS

The NC shall elect the following national officers:

i) The editor of "Workers' Fight", who has overall responsibility for the production, distribution and, within the limits laid down by the Aggregate and the NC, the political line of the paper.

ii) National Secretary, who is responsible for:
Communication between the NC, SC, branches and fractions.
Correspondance not covered by the editor of 'WF' and the treasurer.
Preparing for and convening SC meetings.
Keeping an up to date file on membership, reports, correspondance, minutes, etc.
Acting as an administrative secretary to the SC and NC.

iii) National Treasurer, who is responsible for:
Keeping up to date accounts of the organisations finances
Collecting subscriptions from the branches.
Authorising routine expenditures.
Presenting financial reports to the NC and the aggregate.

7 STEERING COMMITTEE

The SC is responsible for the day to day implimentation of NC decisions; for reacting to events that occur unexpectedly and require immediate action; for political leadership; for the routine administrative and organisational running of Workers' Fight.

- i) The SC shall be elected by and responsible to the NC.
- ii) It shall consist of the National Secretary and not less than three other NC members.
- iii) It shall report monthly to the NC.

8. SUB)COMMITTEES

The NC shall elect the following sub-committees which do not necessarily have to consist of NC members, but which must include at least one NC member.

- i) Financial sub-cttee. - to include the treasurer.
- ii) "Workers' Fight" Editorial Board - to include the Editor plus one ede. to be elected by the NC as Business manager.
- iii) "Permanent Revolution" Editorial Board - to include one member elec ted by the NC as editor.
- iv) Publications Cttee. - to be responsible for approving all other publications besides W F and PR.

9. Branches .

The geographical unit of Workers' Fight is the branch, Branches are responsible for the political activity of Workers' Fight in a particular area and for the political education of their members, especially candidate members.

- i) Branches will be recognised according to the experience, reliability, consciousness and number of members in a particular locality.

- ii) Only the Aggregate or the NC can ratify the existence of a branch.
- iii) Branches can be sub-divided either geographically or functionally into cells, but a strictly internal meeting of the whole branch must be held at least monthly.
- iv) Only a full branch meeting can elect new or full members.
- v) Branches are obligated to send regular reports and minutes of internal meetings to the National Secretary.
- vi) Branches should elect:
 - A Secretary - to be responsible for communication with the National Secretary, members of the branch, informing the Nat. Sec. of new members, etc.
 - A Treasurer - To be responsible for collecting subscriptions and sending them to the Nat. Treas.
 - A paper Organiser - To be responsible for ordering, distributing and organising paper sales as well as sending in the money for the papers.
 (If a branch is divided into geographical cells then each cell should elect these officers if necessary).

10. FRACTIONS

Fractions are the organisations of Workers' Fight which coordinate and initiate national activity in a particular union, industry or company.

- i) Fractions are ratified by the NC or the aggregate.
- ii) The NC or the aggregate shall elect a convenor of each fraction.
- iii) Each fraction may be subdivided geographically into cells according to geography. The cells must keep in regular contact with the convenor.
- iv) Fraction convenors shall report to the NC.

11. INTERNAL BULLETIN.

The Internal Bulletin shall serve as an instrument for:

- a) Promoting theoretical and political discussion in the group.
- b) Providing a means of generalising on the lessons that have been learnt from activity in a particular area, industry, union, etc.
- c) Playing an organising and centralising role in national campaigns.

To this end:

- i) The IB shall be produced at least one every two months.
- ii) The NC shall elect an IB editor, who will be responsible for commissioning articles production and distribution.
- iii) The editor has no right to refuse for publication any article submitted before the deadline unless he has received permission from the NC in accordance with section 5 subsection xii of the constitution. He can, however, ask for a contribution and/or labour towards the production of articles over 2 000 words.
- iv) The IB and its contents shall not in any way be communicated to non-members without the express permission of the aggregate or NC.

12. DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURES

- i) The branches can suspend a member, who can appeal to the NC against the suspension.
- ii) Only the Aggregate or the NC can expell a full member.
- iii) If any full member's expulsion is to be proposed at the NC then that member must be notified at least two weeks in advance and have the opportunity to defend themself.
- iv) Any full member who is expelled by the NC can appeal to the Aggregate, whose decision is final.
- v) Readmitting a previously expelled member requires the approval of the NC or the Aggregate.

13. FACTIONS AND TENDANCIES.

Any group of members have the right to form a faction or tendency to fight for a particular point of view within the organisation. Workers' Fight recognises a tendency as an ideological grouping organised for an ideological discussion within the organisation. Workers' Fight recognises a faction as a grouping which sets out to fight either to change the policy of the organisation on a particular issue or to replace the existing leadership by members of the faction.

- i) The conditions of membership for members of factions differ in no way from the conditions laid out in section 1 of the Constitution.
- ii) Factions can produce their own publications for circulation within the organisation can hold internal meetings to put over their position; can put up members for election on a faction platform.
- iii) In any dispute between a faction and the NC or SC, then both the faction and the NC or SC have equal rights to use the organisations apparatus.
- iv) A faction must not carry its platform outside the organisation without the permission of the Aggregate or the NC. If it does so then its members are subject to disciplinary procedures.
- v) Whilst recognising the rights of factions as outlined above, Workers' Fight does not regard itself as a discussion club, debating endlessly without reaching a binding decision that leads to action. The rights of individual members do not contravene the rights of the organisation as a whole. Democracy in the organisation means not only the protection of the rights of a minority, but also the protection of the rule of the majority. Aggregate decisions are binding on all Workers' Fight members without exception, and any member who violates the decisions of the Aggregate or who attempts to revive discussion of decided questions without the formal authorisation of the organisation, forfeits his or her right to be a member of the organisation.

14. CONTROL COMMISSION

The Aggregate will elect annually a Control Commission whose duty is to independently investigate disputes within the organisation should one or other of the disputing parties request such an investigation or if the National Cttee. so decides. The Control Commission members will consist of three full members of the organisation. Steering Committee members are not allowed to be members of the Control Commission.

14 THE CONSTITUTION. The Constitution can only be changed by an Aggregate.

ECONOMIC PERSPECTIVES

Introduction:

The present world capitalist crisis is fundamentally one of profitability. As previously indicated (see I.B. 25 for the background), it was accentuated, but not caused by, the onset of the massive price rises in raw materials and oil in 1972-1974. It is the profitability crisis which has underlain the accelerated inflation since 1968; which culminated in the breakup of the international monetary system as established at Bretton Woods in 1944 i.e. fixed exchange rates, punctuated by occasional devaluations for the major world currencies, and a dollar pegged to an unchanging gold price of 35 $\frac{1}{2}$ per ounce. And, as the crisis intensified, these changes in the monetary sphere themselves added to the instability of world capitalism, while at the same time being indispensable for the functioning of world trade at this juncture. Furthermore, it has been pointed out by Dr. Emminger, of the West German Federal Bank, that fixed exchange rates are not a possibility for the foreseeable future. Hence, the gold crisis, which has been smouldering since 1969, and the problems arising from currency speculation by the banks, while under control at this point, threaten to flare up in the future. So what are the immediate prospects for world capitalism?

Clearly, this question cannot be answered in crystal-ball gazing fashion as if economy was an automatic, mechanical process. Economic relations are at bottom social relations, and are accordingly modified by the outcome of class battles, by victories, or defeats, or quiescence of the working class in the face of capitalist attacks on its living standards or organisations. The same goes for national liberation and revolutionary struggles in the underdeveloped countries (likely to become more desperate as the economic situation in these deteriorates), or, for example, in the event of a new Middle East War. Capitalism will not collapse of its own accord. It will have to be consciously smashed. "There are no impossible situations for the bourgeoisie" (Trotsky). So, any prognosis has to be short-term and provisional. Revolution, general strike, or even a wages explosion can alter the economic situation rapidly in a given country or internationally. Given this, the economic recovery in prospect could be delayed, foreshortened, or aborted by changes in class relations. Even with a "co-operative" working class and "favourable" (from the capitalist standpoint) international political situation, leading bourgeois sources only expect the economic recovery to be modest by post-war standards.

The World Economy

The recession which started in 1974 is undoubtedly the worst since the 2nd. World war in terms of its generalised international scope, the decline in output, exports, and unemployment. Throughout 1975 it has continued to deepen.

- The fall off in industrial production has been quite dramatic and is now diffused throughout industry, rather than being limited to a few sectors, as it was for the first few months (the following approximate figures give some indication of its scope).

JAPAN	20%
WEST GERMANY	10%
UNITED STATES	13% (8 months to June 1975)
FRANCE	15%
ITALY	19% (May 1974 to May 1975)
BRITAIN	7 $\frac{1}{2}$ % (from peak during 3rd. quarter of 1973)

- The world export market in manufactures has declined 5% this year

- The end of May OECD Survey showed that in the OECD Countries (main capitalist countries) unemployment was put at about 14 million, which is equivalent to 5% of the labour forces combined. In the EEC alone, the figure then was 4.43 mn. In addition, short-time working is at an all time high in a number of countries.

<u>Country</u>	<u>Latest Unemployment Figures (+)</u>	<u>Short-Time (+)</u>
UNITED STATES	8.2mn. (8.9% labour force)	
WEST GERMANY	1.02mn.	800000(June) (++)
ITALY	1mn.+ (+++)	
CANADA	(7 $\frac{1}{2}$)	
BELGIUM	160000 (6,+)	
U.K.	901000+ (June 9) (++++)	200000+
JAPAN	1mn. approx.	

These figures are, needless to say, underestimates of the true situation. Furthermore, unemployment is greater than average, in some cases 2-3 or more times, amongst youth and blacks in the U.S., youth and foreign workers in Europe, workers in depressed regions and especially depressed industries.

Inflation

Now, in order that bourgeois governments could do something to arrest the recession; by, in the initial stages, stimulating production and consumption by tax concessions, investment allowances, government spending, credit easing, etc., the rate of inflation nationally and internationally had to come down.

The inflation rate in the last few months has eased up in the major centres of capitalist power, with the exception of Britain. The main reasons for this have been (a) the stabilisation of oil prices with falling demand, (b) the dramatic fall in the price of basic raw materials since the 2nd. quarter, under the impact of the recession. These are down by about $\frac{1}{2}$ from May 1974 to May 1975 (ie. about 30% up on 1972 when the price explosion of raw materials began), with metal prices down by 40%. (c) the level of unemployment has undermined the combativity of the class in various countries, and bourgeois ideology has been effective, so far, in holding it back (the t.u. leaderships have played their classical roles, not least in Italy where the CGIL- CP dominated leadership has moderated wage claims in demonstration of its "responsibility" and fitness to share in governmental tasks) to produce falling real wages.

Recovery

At the same time there has been a general slowdown in the rate of decline of industrial output over the last few months and, in addition, some marginal improvement in the unemployment rate very recently in a number of countries (although unemployment rates, output, and investment, do not necessarily synchronise in terms of the business cycle. For example, in the U.S.A. there is likely to be some further deterioration in unemployment and capital investment together with continued checking of the fall in output, and eventually real growth, as spare capacity is taken up). Thus the world recession looks as if it is "bottoming out" ie. real growth is likely to be resumed in the last half of this year and the beginning of next, although individual countries will differ in their tempos. This development will be helped by the small reflationary measures taken by governments (U.S., Germany, Japan, France, Italy mainly) which should become effective in the first half of 1976.

However, as yet there is no real industrial revival, in spite of the fact that internationally short term bank lending rates have continued to fall over preceding months. This is due to (a) pessimism regarding profitability (b) de-stocking ie. selling off stocks which have accumulated during the recession (c) paying back of debts and concern with improvement in company liquidity - the improvement in the flow of real cash, a development which should be aided by the de-stocking process and government tax concessions, increased grants etc. to firms.

(+) Where not recorded, no readily available figures. (++) German sources admit that the previous month's figure of 920000 may be a truer reflection, due to firms closed for holidays.

(+++)

(++++)

Furthermore, the recovery is problematic for a number of reasons.

(i) In spite of government wishes, state costs have continued to increase as a proportion of the G.N.P.s. (More on this below) Hence, the continuing impact on inflation. Thus, the general inflation rate is presently stuck at a level above the 1973 level (which was the record achieved at the height of the last boom) as are most national inflation rates, in spite of the recession. The inflationary push of modern monopoly capitalism in its quest for profitability is admitted by certain bourgeois economists. Thus Maurice Bommesath in July 'Europa' - "The situation is the same internationally, with the same characteristic features in individual countries: increase of state costs and public service charges, rising farm prices. There is a danger that this will lead to a further thrust by wages, pushing up industrial prices at a time when manufacturers will already be seeking to compensate (by price rises - PS) to some extent for the effects of the fall in business on their profit margins " (my emphasis - PS).

(ii) Any large scale government reflationary measures would dangerously accelerate the inflation rate, without independent forces in the productive base massively boosting surplus value. This is a fundamental dilemma for capitalism at this juncture. The rise in non-productive (in terms of capital expanding, rather than capital consuming) state expenditures has been both a product of working class strength in the postwar situation, but has also become a contradictory policy option by governments. As industry has become increasingly capital intensive, outlets for the increasing realisation of surplus value have diminished and profit rates have fallen. Hence, state expenditures have become a means of keeping up employment rates in the face of manufacturers rationalising (shedding labour) but not employing corresponding numbers in new outlets. However, this increasing non-productive expenditure exacerbates the profitability-inflation nexus. An increasing rate of exploitation (in fact an accelerating rate of exploitation increase) would be required to prevent the above mentioned effect. (+) Thus increases in state expenditure are becoming less effective as weapons in the anti-cyclical armoury, and more destabilising in the long run. Accordingly, any upswing in world economy is likely to see more modest growth than in previous cycles and a larger core of unemployed.

(iii) The days of cheap oil and raw materials are over. Unless there are unforeseeable changes in the political-military relationships between the advanced capitalist nations and the underdeveloped raw material exporting nations, and the countries of the Middle East, there will not be the consistent decline in their export prices relative to those of finished goods, as there was in the '50's, '60's and beginning of the '70's. Any rise in inflation with economic recovery is likely to be matched by at least corresponding price increases, thus further cutting down the chances of sustained growth.

(iv) The possibility of a chain reaction of bank collapses bringing on another 'Great Crash' has been averted for the moment. Central banks have increased their supervision over banks' foreign exchange transactions. Also the debts and bankruptcies incurred in 1974 due mainly to currency speculation, have been underwritten by the banks. That is not to say that a similar situation could not arise again in the event of wildly fluctuating currencies in the face of roaring inflation. However, there is another aspect to the relationships between banks and industry. In the last few years, as profit rates have taken a dive, the proportion of capital raised by self-financing i.e. out of retained profits, has diminished, thus making industry more dependant on banks and finance companies. Company indebtedness to banks has accordingly risen (the famous liquidity crisis, so acute in Britain in the recent period). But banks are increasingly apprehensive in extending credit. Key capital ratios (the ratio of banks' own capital to deposits) have continued to decline internationally. Thus there is a problem of bank viability as the uncertain economic prospects bring with them the risk of increases in bankruptcies and bad debt defaults.

(+) Undoubtedly, in the sixties and into the seventies the rate of exploitation has increased. This can be seen when one considers the rise in real earnings, including overtime, and increases in industrial and manufacturing production. The figures are for the undynamic British economy where productivity increases have been relatively low. Hence, the relationship applies even more in the more dynamic economies.

April		
April 1963-April 1973	Increase in real disposable average earnings	= 19.5%
	Increase in industrial production	= 43%

(Calculations based on Department of Employment Gazette, National Institute Economic Review)

(v) Finally, the danger to the world system of payments due to the massive surpluses accumulated by the oil-producing countries has, for the moment, subsided. The oil deficits have been much reduced - partly by the fall off in demand, but also by the continually growing volume of imports of finished goods, plant, equipment etc. from the advanced capitalist countries. (+)

At the moment the surplus funds have been largely invested in short and medium term deposits in New York and London. Also, for the moment, those countries with the most adverse balance of payments problems are covered by the OECD \$ 25 bn. "safety net" + IMF funds + EEC funds in addition to other international loans, should the need arise. Obviously, that puts additional pressure on the bourgeoisie of those countries (Britain, Italy, Denmark) to control their own working class in order to reduce their b.o.p. deficits and to pay back the accumulating interest charges on loans. (The British loans taken out to cover the deficit last year amounted to 5% of the Gross National Product)!

On the other hand, should there be a continuous depreciation in a given currency, the dangers of oil money being withdrawn in large amounts from that country could have disastrous effects in dislocating the system of international payments as a flight from that currency is precipitated.

In addition, should inflation intensify, with consequent disparity between national rates, the oil funds could become increasingly volatile, with calamitous results on the world monetary system. The existence of the still substantial, and accumulating, oil surpluses are an additional important potential destabiliser preventing substantial governmental reflationary measures in the advanced capitalist countries.

The British Situation

The plight of British capitalism is undoubtedly most serious. Its crisis is the result of an intermeshing of structural and conjunctural features i.e. of the product of the long term historical decline, due to specific weaknesses of British capitalism relative to its major competitors, aggravated by the present international crisis, and in turn being part of that.

Briefly, the specific structural features of the crisis can be itemised as follows: -

- (i) The general lack of sufficient adequate investment in the most modern techniques (+). The decline of manufacturing investment as a proportion of Gross National Product.
- (ii) The continuing diminution in the share of the world manufacturing export markets (++) while exports continue to constitute an increasing share of the GNP. This is both cause and consequence of (i) above, and underlies
- (iii) A continuous balance of payments problem; an almost uninterrupted devaluation of the British currency since the December 1971 international currency alignments, relative to the major world currencies.

Thus the Bevan plans for doubling the amount of new investment per year in manufacturing industry - plans which many serious bourgeois commentators are prepared to admit would be in the long term interests of British capitalism if they could be brought to fruition. This remains economically and politically unfeasible at this point in time. It would require a massive cut in workers' living standards, and sort of control of finance and industrial capital which is not tolerable to the British capitalists and their international counterparts. The labour concessions on the Industry Bill, which is far less drastic than Bevan's plans, illustrate the point here.

Conjunctural Features

The British profitability-inflation crisis is part of the international crisis, but is aggravated by the specific weaknesses of British capitalism. 1. Thus, the decline in profitability has been most acute (++++). This has manifested itself in a liquidity crisis, in an increasing indebtedness of industry to the banks and financial institutions (++++) coupled with a shortage of funds for re-investment, and record bankruptcies. (++++)

2. Inflation, as in other major capitalist countries, is at an all time high. However, unlike these it has in recent months been rising, and is now running at a higher rate than in any of them. This is the capitalist response to the especial fall in profitability, and the effects on this of (i) the output falls, which have not been so spectacular.

(+) The 5 Year Plan recently drawn up by the Saudi Arabian Government envisages spending an enormous £12000 million a year on schools, roads, refineries, heavy industry. This is only one example of the massive spending being undertaken by oil producing states.

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- as in the other major economies (ii) the continuing rise in state expenditure and budgetary deficit (again, no more pronounced than many of the other major economies) (iii) the continuing depreciation of sterling, bringing with it a continuing increase in import prices - there has been a 1% depreciation in sterling from end of March to end of June alone. - (iv) the working class as a whole just about keeping up with the rise in prices (v) the recent budget measures - higher taxes etc.
3. Unemployment is now at an all time record. It is expected to pass the official 1 million mark in the next few weeks.
 4. Output has continued to decline (see international comparisons p.1) and is now below the level achieved during the 3 day week.
 5. There has been a sudden downturn in investment. In the 1st quarter of 1975 manufacturing investment fell by 8% on the previous quarter (investment in new vehicles fell by 20%), investment by the distributive and service sector declined by 8% in that period and by 17% on the average quarter of 1973. Unsold finished goods have been piling up.

However, the decline in output and investment has so far been modest by international comparisons, largely because the investment orders, purchased with the massive credit expansion of the boom, of 1972-73, have been working their way through. But the prospect now is for a large fall off in investment, and in output, which will interact with the corresponding rise in unemployment. Even if unemployment does not reach the 1 1/2 million mark forecast by certain sources, it will certainly go way beyond the million mark by the end of the year and will increase into 1976. Should the freeze stick, this will add tens of thousands to the dole queue in the next few months. This, with the continuing high inflation; the continuing losing out on the world markets and the continued deterioration of the pound; the still massive borrowing requirements to finance the balance of payments deficit, British capitalism is in a worse plight than all its advanced competitors. Although the Government has recently put £2,000 million into the pockets of big business, this is likely to do no more than help them pay back some of their debts to the banks. The government expenditure curbs for the next period, the freeze, and the declaration of intent by Healey and other labour ministers to continue similar measures for years ahead are the first installments of capital's major assault of the working class. Apart from the massive unemployment levels in the coming months, assuming the world upturn materialises, the British upturn will be the t much less than its competitors (unless a mad credit-inflationary boom is initiated-which would be the forerunner to a catastrophic crash), the hardcore unemployment will almost certainly be greater than hitherto. (vi) The fundamental economic plight and increasing instability of British capitalism, especially as the class hits back, will make it more urgent than ever that the working class be bridled in the years to come. It is in that urgent context that we fight to build the necessary revolutionary leadership.

Phil Semp. Mid-July 1975,

(++) 1962 to 1974 investment per worker in manufacturing industry was lower than in major competitors and every year it was often only about 1/2 the average level.

(+++)

	1963	1965	1966	1967	1968	1969	1970	1971	1972	1973	1974
UK share in world export manufactures	10.4	13.9	13.2	12.3	11.6	11.3	10.8	10.9	10.0	9.4	8.8

Source: NATIONAL INSTITUTE ECONOMIC REVIEW Feb.1975, May 1975

(+++)

	1963-65 (avge.)	1966-67	1968	1969	1970	1971	1972	1973	1974	1974 1st half
Share of net post-tax profits in net national income %	11.6	9.5	9.9	8.7	7.2	7.8	7.5	7.5	3	6

Source: NIER February 1975

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M.A. King "the U.K. profitcrisis: myth or reality?" - Economic Journal March 1975 - estimated that negative profits occurred in the 1st. quarter of 1974.

(+++++) One measure is net indebtedness of companies to the banks

	Liquid Assets £mn.	Bank Borrowings £mn.	Net Indebtedness £mn.
end1971	5490	6431	941
end1972	7737	9730	1993
end1973	10129	11421	4292
Sept.1974	10372	17366	6994

Source: Midland Bank Review February 1975

Another measure, which reflects the first, to a large extent, is the gap between company profits and company outlay (new capital expenditure and interest charges)

1974	Gross Trading Profits less stock appreciation	= £4889 mn.
	Interest Charges	= £3200 mn.
	Capital Expenditure	= £5000 mn.

Liquidity gap approximately £3300 mn. in 1974

Source: W.A.P. Manser - "The Corporate Crisis" - Bankers' Magazine June 1975.

(++++++)

	Companies	Liquidated
March 1975	March 1975	= 120
	Increase over <u>one month</u>	= 42.9 %
	Increase over <u>one year</u>	= 60 %

Source: Standard Bank Review May 1975.

(K) Bourgeois sources are admitting this, but are exhorting workers not to put in for wage increases which do no more than compensate for the rise in prices since the last claim - echoed by Healy and concretised in the latest freeze. eg. Sunday Business News 15/6/75 - Inflation since March 1973 = 39 %; Average Gross Wage since then = 45.9 %, questioning whether average net wage has kept up with the rise in inflation!!

(KK) The chronic growing structural crisis of British capitalism and its relation to developments in world economy can be no more graphically illustrated than in the following :-

Developments in the British Business Cycle

Cycle	Peak	Industrial Output (Trough to peak %)	Consumer Prices (Peak to peak %)	Peak Unemployment (Thousands)
10/58-10/62	3/60	14.5	13.0	461.1
10/62-12/66	12/64	15.6	17.0	559.9
12/66-3/71	5/69	11.7	19.5	547.†
3/71-	10/73	12.6	35.2	901.1 and rising

Source: Economic Trends May 1975

Engineering Fraction Report 1975

The last meeting of the fraction was on the 17th May, this was the first time I met the comrades of the fraction in my capacity as convenor.

Report of the Meeting May 17th

The Agenda:

1. Area Reports
2. Wages and Conditions
3. Broad Left
4. Young Workers
5. A.H. on the AUEW

I will briefly go through each subject and the conclusions.

Area reports - each area report on the situation at 1. his work place 2. Local 3. relations with other groups in the area.

Notts

GB reported that Stanton Stead Works had not been invited to participate in the National Campaign on closures and expressed his feelings that the campaign is being conducted on a regional and chauvanistic way.

GB had argued for a sliding scale of wages but this had been rejected and at that time were waiting for national agreement. The local situation was mainly devoted to the textile industry where workers were mostly calling for trade barriers to off set the threat of redundancies. One group of workers at a factory in Elkiston was calling on management to ~~the books~~ open the books to prove that the factory was bankrupt. Comrades in Notts. were keeping a close eye on the situation.

The relations with other groups in the area - CP very small and not very active. IS had been working with the comrades trying to set up a rank and file group in the area.

Coventry

S.W. reported on the Dunlop and Chrysler dispute, and explained that the right wing in the AUEW were making and taking the lead in the dispute. This was because the right wing wanted to put on a militant face. ~~Eric~~ Eric was connected to the elections in the AUEW nationally.

Eric's management had offered 9 $\frac{1}{2}$ % in May but this had been rejected by the stewards and they had put in a claim for an increase of 24 $\frac{1}{2}$ %.

SW explained that where he worked they were in discussion with management over accommodation for union meetings at work.

Relations with other groups was quite good and has been producing the Coventry Worker for quite a while. The CP was strong and quite active. IS had lost a lot of members but was still quite active.

Northampton

D.G. reported that Northampton was a backward area and that it did not have a tradition of militancy. At the moment they were waiting their local wage claim. Reported that the CP had approached him in relation to trying to set up a Broad Left in the area. The Fraction approved this because it felt that we would have a big say in how it was to be run.

Also reported was the fact that at that time there was a strike in process at Boots building site and that we had a comrade that was involved - collection sheet given round.

London: PS reported that he and BC and GK were trying to set up a works bulletin at Acton works. This bulletin would be circulated through the fraction.

He also reported that the wage claim in the process of being negotiated and went on to explain the situation of the claim. They had been offered 21.2% and this was the same offer British Rail had been given. It was quite a complicated offer ~~but~~ and the stewards had rejected it. Waiting to see what the next offer would be given to the NUR because of their situation which was indirectly connected with the BR negotiations.

Relations with other groups - IS and IMG had both one member each at Acton. They were not very active but were helping with the bulletin. The CP were very strong and controlled the stewards ctee. The comrade felt that there was a good possibility of doing some good work in there. The situation was that the CP had concentrated most of its strength at the top of the union structure and neglected the rank and file. This had caused a void on the shop floor.

The conclusions that were arrived at were: that there would be 1. more articles in the paper by the fraction 2. that all union, management journals would be sent to the centre and convenor. This would enable us to keep a better grasp on the situation. 3. If possible any agreements to be sent to the centre.

Wages and Conditions

G.B gave a brief report on the economic situation and stressed the importance of trying to implement our policy on the wages front. He also stressed the importance of the 35 hour week and to try and start a campaign around this. This would mean more articles in the paper, bulletin and through our various union branches.

It was felt that AH should express an idea that he had on the wage negotiations in the AUEW. The proposals put forward by AH was in connection with the way the AUEW negotiated its wage claims nationally and then left it up to the localities to fight. He thought we could intervene effectively and still retain our indep. from ^{other} left wing groups.

The fraction felt that AH should draw up a discussion paper on the subject in more detail to be fully discussed at the next fraction meeting.

Young Workers

BC gave brief report on his experience in the Junior Workers Committee in the AUEW. He stressed his optimism at the role we could play. In the discussion that followed it was expressed that a paper could be produced on the same lines as Young Soc. Felt that BC should write a discussion paper on the subject in more detail to be fully discussed at the next meeting.

Broad Left

BC went into great detail about his experience in the broad left in Harlow and felt that only in certain circumstances should we get involved.

DG explained his position in relation to the broad left. It was agreed that the comrades should get involved.

PETE SMITH

SOME REMARKS ABOUT RANK AND FILE MOVEMENTS, OUR OWN EFFORTS TO
DEVELOP INDUSTRIAL PAPERS AND OUR ATTITUDE TOWARDS IS'S ATTEMPT
TO INITIATE A "NATIONAL RANK AND FILE
MOVEMENT"

Despite a vigorous development of rank and file activity in the trade unions as a response and counterweight to the bureaucratisation of these organisations, most of this activity has remained localised, fitful, and unstructured. Where structures exist, they are fairly varied, and the different types of development demand different responses. Essentially, the structures have fallen into three distinct types. We shall call them co-ordinating, campaigning and political.

Co-ordinating organisations

The do-it-yourself, sectional economic struggle that dominated the fifties and early sixties - best exemplified by the development of strong shop organisations in the engineering industry in that period - threw up some industry-wide organisations which were very short-lived. One such was MASS (Motor and Ancillary Shop Stewards) out of which developed THE BIG SIX (see WF no 104). In general, however, it was shop organisation rather than inter-site organisation that was developed.

More recently there has been a development of combine committees in companies like Fords, BLMC, Plessey, GEC-AEI-EE, Lucas Aerospace and many others. Given the degree of concentration of capital and its acceleration through mergers and vertical and horizontal combination this form of rank and file organisation has been remarkably weak.

In many cases where they do exist they limit their activities to the most routine comparison of rates and conditions but refrain from pledging joint struggle because they know it won't happen. Occasionally the pledge is made and usually it leads to nothing resulting in a loss of confidence and the demise for a period of the combine.

The combine committees and all-industry co-ordinating committees, like the one just set up in the motor trade, vary a great deal in their relation to the trade union bureaucracy on the one hand and the rank and file on the other. The Ford shop stewards' organisation, for instance, is recognised by the T&GWU as a force to be consulted regularly; the BLMC one has recently gained status through the floating of workers' participation schemes in the firm; the Lucas one has a close relationship, it appears, with the rank and file etc. etc.

More striking is the lack of such all-inclusive combine or co-ordinating bodies in industries like steel and the ports. There the small number of crucial sites and the huge leverage they have in the economy, the strong identification of these workers with their industry and the absolute necessity of preventing the employers splitting them up and pitting one against the other ought to have produced a fairly stable combine organisation.

In the case of the steel industry an organisation of this type, SNAC (Steel National Action Committee) was set up to fight the redundancies BSC announced through the 1973 White Paper. The Committee embraced a large number of works affected by the cut-backs but none of those where there was no announced reduction of the workforce...the biggest and most important works. While resolutions were passed at its meetings which then became policy, the SNAC had no platform other than what could be inferred from the

impulse to establish it in the first place: it was set up to fight the closures and partial closures announced by the British Steel Corporation. While it would have been stupid in an organisation basically of the combine type to try to present it with a rounded political platform - indeed any sort of platform that would prevent its co-ordinative function - it would have been equally remiss of us if we had not put forward a definite position on the fight against redundancies for acceptance as a platform. No abstract rules can be invented for this, but the fact remains that the SNAC fell apart partly because it had no common line. Thus far from the firm laying down of a line being an obstacle to co-ordination on an all-inclusive basis, without doing so there is no co-ordination possible at all. Comprehensiveness needs to be balanced against clear focus.

The NPSSC (National Ports Shop Stewards Committee), in which we took the decisive initiating role was also basically of this type, though it based itself on the nine points of the Dockers' Charter. In this it lay halfway between the all-inclusive combine type of organisation which may make policy statements but does not usually have a platform and the third type below, the political organisation.

Working in these movements it is absolutely vital not to present our political line in an ultimatum fashion: the more a movement is the spontaneous outgrowth of the working class response to attacks on it, the less you can do this.

Apart from sabotage by the Stalinists the most common cause of the demise of these committees, which in principle ought to be very stable, is the fact that they consist of stewards who do not report back to their forms or shops, but at most to their stewards' committees. The result is that a call from the SNAC would have been met by rank and file steelworkers with blank stares, and the stewards know this. Besides simply advocating the necessity of report-backs, it is useful here to advocate penny-collections from the works for the combine funds. This search for funds is often the first step in sorting out those who are taking the matter to membership and those who are not. It may be possible not only to alter the place of the meetings so that it is held in each major centre at some time, but to combine this with a mass meeting or at least a meeting of all stewards. In short various devices ought to be sought to try to get over the fact that only the smallest fraction of the work-force is ever directly involved in these committees, and often a very conservative fraction at that.

We should look for every opportunity of creating a revolutionary or militant caucus within such organisations and extending to those militants in sites represented who are not themselves the convenors or chief stewards. They can fight for delegacies in some cases against these and where this is not possible pressure for certain mandates, report-backs and so on.

Campaign organisations

The period between 1910 and 1922 saw the emergence and development of a large number of spontaneous popularly rooted rank and file movements focused more or less on a single issue. Chief of these were the amalgamationist movements and reform movements. It is consistent with the rank

& file nature of these movements that they spilled over into broader issues of class struggle: class collaboration, support for the Labour Party, union democracy and so on. Thus, while in one sense a single issue campaign, the miners amalgamation campaign in South Wales, for example, really embraced a whole number of basic trade union issues. In fact, its best known publication, *The Miners Next Step*, was more about class collaboration, wages, hours and negotiating practices than it was about amalgamation itself.

The reason for this is simple: workers are not interested in good ideas, for instance, this or that union structure, if they are not directly related to a more forceful prosecution of a particular struggle they support. Amalgamation, in this sense, was less a movement which spilled over into issues of class collaboration as was directly motivated by them.

But what of the preconditions for that movement? To illustrate something of its situation let us recall that Lenin, writing to Bell about the problems of starting a communist paper in Britain, suggested he go to the South Wales coalfield and collect a penny a man from the miners there to finance a daily. Maybe Lenin overestimated the movement. Whether or not this was a bit overoptimistic the suggestion conveys something of the ferment in the Rhondda in 1919... In 1915 200,000 miners struck in South Wales; in 1917 200,000 engineers struck in 48 different towns; in 1916 the metal workers of Sheffield and those of Darrow struck to get one man, Hargreaves, released from the army to which he had just been conscripted... and they won!

Despite a significant rise in struggle compared with the fifties this is not the situation today.

Year	Working days lost (,000s)	Workers involved (,000s)	Average number of days lost per striker
average for 1953 - 1964	3,712	1,081	3.3
1965	2,925	876	3.3
1966	2,398	544	4.4
1967	2,787	734	4.0
1968	4,680	2,258	2.1
1969	6,876	1,665	4.1
1970	10,980	1,801	6.1
1971	13,551	1,171	12.1
1972	23,909	1,734	13.8

True, the above figures do not include political strikes, which when added to the 1972 figure in particular would boost the numbers, yet it is still not nearly the kind of ferment that was a lead up to the birth of the Minority Movement.

This is not to discount the possibility of such a development occurring, though at present it would be foolish to have high hopes of it. Not only

is the vanguard smaller and less bold, but also the existence of a party, the Communist Party, that commands the allegiance of a substantial section of the vanguard but will do what it can to destroy any rank and file development, reduces the possibilities. An attempt to force such a development where the preconditions were not present logically leads simply to an attempt to find a modus vivendi with the Communist Party on a single issue (what the IMG is doing!). This modus vivendi, however, can only be established on the basis of subordinating oneself to the Stalinists and joining with them to act as a barrier against any struggles developing in a revolutionary direction.

It is worth pointing out two developments that augur well for popular single issue developments in certain areas.

Firstly, the anti-JIB (Joint Industry Board) campaign centred on the grading scheme in the electrical contracting industry: this was a campaign of the 1967 - 1969 period led by the Communist Party members in the industry which certainly had considerable grass roots support. Although it was more a campaign than a movement, its strong support constantly threatened to break the banks of the single issue and relate to a wide range of pressing issues in the EPU. These issues more or less defined the EPU broad left. Of course, this development can be accounted for only by reference to a quite "abnormal" circumstance: the CP members in the industry acted more like regular class fighters because they knew there was no point trying to suck up to the bureaucracy of the EPU, imposed on the union as it was by the courts in the aftermath of the notorious ballot-rigging case of 1961. Nevertheless it does show that from time to time, in this section or another, scope does emerge for single issue campaigns which imply a wider class programme and are capable of structuring a whole left wing. When these occur revolutionaries must relate to them with great energy being careful both to try to broaden the implications of the issue and to maintain it as a clear focus.

The pay-beds campaign in the hospitals which flairs up every now and again is a completely unstructured development tapping basic class feeling in the industry - though as yet not spilling over into any of the extremely important connecting issues in the health service. A measure of its support is to be gauged from the fact that the "leader" of this outburst at the Charing Cross Hospital was a right-winger who simply had to take up that militant position because of the pressure behind her.

It is interesting and illuminating to contrast this sometimes fiery spontaneous mass action, like at Charing Cross and Morrirston, with the Medical Committee Against Private Practice organised by the IMG. This campaign is completely invisible to all but a few left-wingers - often the professionals in the health service, like doctors. This contrast is a measure of the fact that picking the right issue is no substitute for building a base from which a real mobilisation can take place.

Political organisations

The two types of rank and file organisation dealt with above not only overlap slightly with one another - for instance the SNAC was both a combine organisation and a single issue campaign organisation - but overlap

also somewhat with this third type, the politically based rank and file movements. These divide more or less into two: all-industry movements like the National Minority Movement and IS's National Rank and File Movement, and single-trade or single-union movements like Building Workers Charter and the AUEW "Broad Left".

While the Minority Movement's creation cannot be separated from the foregoing mass rank and file movements, above all the Miners Unofficial Reform Committee Movement, the Shop Stewards and Workers Committees Movement and the Railway Vigilance Committees, there was a gap of about two years between 1922 and 1924 when such rank and file activity almost completely submerged. Of course the leading lights of the minority movements, Tom Mann, Willie Gallacher, A.J.Cook, J.T.Murphy, Arthur McManus and others had been leaders of the foregoing syndicalist struggle. Still, it was on the initiative of the Communist Party and the Red International of Labour Unions (RILU) that the Minority Movement was founded...by which time all but Tom Mann of the above list had become members of the Communist Party.

The Communist Party's role might have been in too "high profile" for the RILU, but without it in some decisive measure the NMM would never have been founded. The point is: the founding of the NMM was not the simple organic outgrowth of the previous movement although its creation would have been unthinkable without them.

The most obvious factors of its promise were the syndicalist rise of the 1910 - 1922 period, the inspiration and authority of the October Revolution, the authority of the CP and those leaders of the NMM who had played such a crucial role in earlier years.

The political platform of the NMM was certainly not confined to bread-and-butter trade unionism: it included international trade union unity, solidarity with the Soviet Union, industrial unionism, opposition to the Dawes plan (the foreign policy of the Labour Party), solidarity with the struggle of the oppressed in the colonies, formation of factory committees and strengthening of trades councils as well as for a stronger TUC General Council, repeal of anti-labour laws, increase of £1 a week, a minimum wage of £4 a week, a 44 hour week etc.

By October 1924 it had organised district conferences all over the country and, for example, organised a rally of 10,000 at Trafalgar Square around the issues of higher wages, the 44 hour week and rejection of the Dawes plan.

At this point the NMM represented about 1,000,000 workers. Not that this number was a mere figure representing the block votes delivered by a few. Membership, which was dues paying, could only be held by bodies of the labour movement voting in the majority for affiliation. Individuals who had not yet convinced their branches were associate members. In short, the NMM, although it was not as vast and complete as some make out by any means, was qualitatively stronger than anything that could be built now. Certainly it was radically different from the IS NRRM.

The IS NRRM really started with a conference built on the Rank and File papers IS was sponsoring. At the time, this not unimpressive rally, was

sponsored by more or less regularly appearing papers in the mines, the building industry, steel, the docks, the motor industry, teachers, civil servants, local government officers, ASTMS, GEC plants, the hospitals, technical colleges etc. What remains of these papers? Rank and File Teacher is the only one with any real base and a regular appearance. Redder Tape (in the CPUSA) and Nalgo action are more or less regular and do have a measure of support. Carworker and Hospital worker occasionally appear but are almost defunct. The rest are defunct.

At first sight it appears that the first ebb of trade union struggle has defeated all these efforts. There is some truth in this, but there is more to it. A number of these papers had been floated on the high tide of 1972's great strikes and those of early 1973. Thus dozens of miners not only backed The Collier after the strike but joined IS. Now that the strike is long over and that a diet of plain militancy is not very helpful in working in the lodge and pit these have left IS and the Collier is no more. The same story goes for Hospital worker exactly. With variations for Dockworker too.

Had IS understood how to relate to the changed situation of 1973 these papers need not have died. The only ones that didn't noticeably were in the areas where white collar workers are often the university generation of 1968 - 1971.

The NRFM based itself on a programme which represented a cross between IS playing at being the "raw" worker and IS really being slipshod. An example of this second feature is the omission of the demand of "instant recall" of trade union officials from the programme, omission of anything relating to nationalisation (!), omission of anything relating to workers' control, omission of anything relating to apprentices etc. But the chief feature of the NRFM platform was its determination at all costs not to be clearly defined. Clear definition received the accolade of being "too advanced" for the workers and thus was to be avoided.

Consequently within weeks of the "conference" taking place there was a lot of discussion about workers' participation, an example of a strike in which the black strikers were in a minority in relation to the rest of the work-force, a case of discrimination at a trade union club, much talk of nationalisation and a demand for a big number of redundancies in the steel industry at Lackenby on Teesside. The NRFM had refused to draw up a platform which related to all these items - except the last - because such a platform would be "ahead of the movement". Still it related to some of these attacks correctly. When it came to the Teesside redundancies, however, the situation, was different. There Arthur Affleck, leading member of the Organising Committee of the NRFM and a National Committee member of IS was the checkweighman (convenor).

Affleck's response to the threat was to call for...a government inquiry! In other words Affleck's response was the same as the local Tory Mp's.

Quickly it became clear that the NRFM was not going to be a movement: it was to be IS's backyard. What was left by 1975 was a sectarian backyard with a narrow and often faulty programme, refusing to face the real issues for fear of "alienating" potential supporters of this frail organisation.

This was neither the Rank and File Movement nor its embryo. Nevertheless it remained and remains more than merely a conference we should seek to

intervene in. After all, whatever the pretensions of the venture, its conduct of campaign like that around the INTEX strike - would there had been more of such campaigns - were sufficient to justify the national organisation of revolutionary caucuses on a continuous basis. There is no doubt that an organisation of the type of the NRFM can make a significant contribution to the development of the class struggle whether or not it is entitled to call itself the NRFM. But more of this latter!

At this point it is sufficient to note that although considerably borne along by the level of confidence of the struggles of 1972 to early 1973 period, this movement never represented large forces, and in no sense could be thought of as more than a revolutionary - unfortunately, more precisely, centrist - catalyst to the organic struggle. This being the case it was of the utmost importance for its programme to be sharp and "hard". One could adopt Marx's famous line from his letter on the Gotha Programme ("one step forward in the real movement is worth more than a dozen programmes") or Engels similar attitude in his reply to Florence Kelly Wischnewsky's request for a "hard line" on Henry George, if the sharp and detailed projection of a programme would in practice have cut across the spontaneous development of the mass movement. But this was not the case.

Indeed the dawning realisation of this by IS forced them - in their eyes - to completely redraw their scheme for the NRFM. For instance in Cliff's book "The Crisis - the Social Contract or Socialism" Cliff says "... building a mass rank and file movement will be very arduous and will demand a great deal of initiative and imagination to transcend sectional divisions in the working class while avoiding empty formalism - organisational shells substituting for real action. That means meetings in every area - of engineers, teachers, gas workers, miners, civil servants, Ford workers, health workers - to plan united action. It means building solidly-based local committees that cut across sectional boundaries and create a real unity of purpose". Fine. One hundred percent correct if a mass rank and file movement is being spoken of. IS rejected moves towards building local bases. No doubt they realised they didn't even have the makings of a mass movement.

The trouble was that in many cases IS behaved as if the NRFM was already an authoritative and powerful movement. For instance they distance they kept from the Communist Party dominated "left" currents and from the LCDTU (Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions) is explicable only in this light - itself a reflection of IS's idea that the Communist Party (not to mention the Labour Party) can be by-passed.

The LCDTU, of course, is another organisation of the same type as the NRFM in so far as it is based - or rather was based - on a national political purpose and attracted adherents in so far as they agreed with that purpose. Little needs to be said about it except that for the Communist Party it was a front to be used now and again partly to pacify the demand from their own members for some kind of rank and file movement. In brief it was a disgusting mockery of a rank and file movement. The only point in going to its conferences was to expose it as a fraud to the few who would listen.

Building Workers Charter has the confidence of a substantial section of the more militant building workers. It bases itself on a six point charter and consists of a paper whose editorial board is partly composed of representatives of the different charter branches. The very existence of a paper - albeit one whose publication is at best erratic - means that the movement is unlikely to be limited to the already converted let alone merely the stewards. This is itself healthy. Despite the heavy domination of the Communist Party it is possible to influence local Charter groups and even to build them oneself without the CPs approval.

Building Workers Charter has suffered a considerable decline because, being a CP dominated organisation, it is incapable of carrying out a consistent and principled fight against the bureaucracy. The authority of the Charter organisation, however, is such that working within the Charter is obligatory for any revolutionary building worker.

At the local level papers like the Charter can be supplemented by regular bulletins published by a Charter group or even some well known stewards. In this way a relative independence from the pace of the Charter can be obtained without appearing to "split" Charter.

It might be mentioned that IS attempted to by-pass Charter. Within weeks of ducking a fight at the Charter conference, it started a paper, Rank and file Building Worker around John Fontaine. A few weeks later John Fontaine joined the Communist Party. End of Story.

The "Broad Left" in the AUEW is a more ambiguous formation: it is the mere shadow of a rank and file movement and also the shadow of the Trade Union bureaucracy. Only the Stalinist could manage such a creature, and for the most part it is all the Stalinists can manage. While relating to what the "Broad Left" is doing is important, indeed vital, for any militant caucus in the AUEW, attending "Broad Left" meetings, being by invitation only, is something few of our members will have the doubtful privilege of doing. If they behave as revolutionaries they are unlikely to be invited again, though if it is an area of CP weakness with elections coming up they might be. Basically the "Broad Left" is a CP electoral machine which attempts to out-bureaucratise the bureaucracy. There can be no thought of subordinating oneself to it one bit.

A. Hornung.