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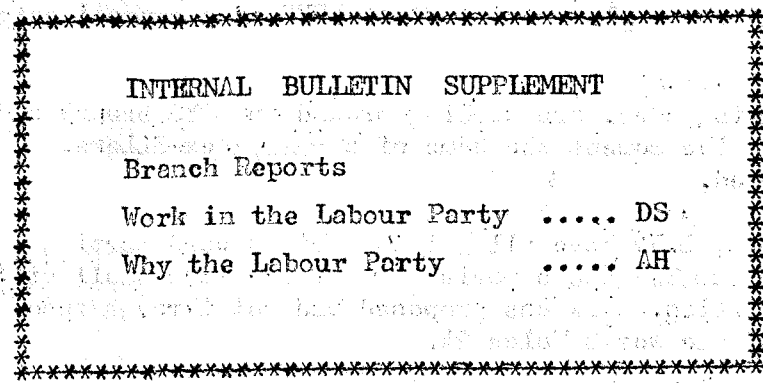
**WORKERS'
FIGHT**

INTERNAL BULLETIN SUPPLEMENT

Branch Reports

Work in the Labour Party DS

Why the Labour Party AH



This bulletin will appear as a regular supplement to the IB and deal with the problems of our activity in the LP and LFYS. Most branches have already started LP work in a serious manner, as the branch reports show. However there is generally a great deal of inexperience and an urgent need for centralisation. This bulletin will be one of methods of providing national cohesion to the LP work. Also we hope to produce a four page monthly paper specifically aimed at being a tool for LP and LFYS activity - more details of this will follow.

LOCAL REPORTS

Northampton Both DG & KB have joined and are in touch with the youth officer in order to start an LPYS. There is at present no LPYS and no RSL.

Coventry There are four constituencies and one LPYS which is RSL dominated. At Warwick university there is Labour Club which has no RSL but is fairly left wing. WF cdes. have been invited to the Labour Club meetings and there is a possibility of starting an LPYS on a council estate near the university. DS has been asked to take charge of the working class area of his LP ward. RSL & RL attend LPYS meetings and there are plans to start an LPYS on a council estate near where they live.

Reading In Reading cdes. are working around an LPYS branch and a left wing LP ward which is at the moment the home of a group of ex-SLLers. The LPYS is small and Militant dominated.

Nottingham IW, PR, SL, K? have all joined various ward parties in the area. GB is a long standing LP member and a parish councillor in a small village with obviously limited possibilities. IW has proposed and got through resolutions on the Housing Finance Bill and the North Wales 24.

Manchester investigation of various LPYS branches planned. JS has affiliated his NUPE branch to the local ward party.

Bracknell SMC had joined and has been doing work in his ward for some time. Is now youth officer and working to build up an LPYS. The party publishes a local newsletter and the latest issue contains an article by SMC on the NW24. SMC has also proposed a resolution on the NW24, which was passed and the party has sent a donation to the defence fund. Bracknell LP has invited a speaker from WF to one of their meetings.

Liverpool Most of our cdes. in L/P have joined and are testing out the possibilities in various wards and LPYS branches.

Teeside TD has been approached by three LP members of some standing who want to discuss WF's politics. The cdes. are doubtful about the relevance of entry work to their area.

London CB is working in an LPYS branch in South London. There are plans for entering a number of LPYS branches in North London but as yet this has not been carried out.

WORK IN THE LABOUR PARTY AND LPYS

1. Reasons for entering.

- a) The LP & LPYS provide a milieu where comrades can win an influence, build a base and make useful contacts.
- b) The LPYS in particular provides an area of activity and training for potential recruits before they join or are ready to join Workers' Fight.
- c) The LPYS is fairly large and political arena - this in itself would be sufficient reason for doing work in the LPYS.
- d) In the run up to the general election, it is likely that the LP will be welcoming rather than expelling members. We should be prepared to make use of this.
- e) With the increasingly apparent unreadiness of the trade union leadership to lead any fight against the Tory government, it is likely that the working class will turn towards a 'political' (i.e. parliamentary) solution and look for a Labour government to be returned at the next election. For us this is not the best alternative, but we are not in a position to shape the outcome of such things and we must therefore be aware of the likely possibilities and be prepared to utilise them for the purposes of building Workers Fight.
- f) The aftermath of the near general strike situation which occurred during the struggle against the Industrial Relations Act has been a ultra-leftish tendency in Workers' Fight, which has meant deficiencies in relating to the normal run of the political life of the class (which is inevitably centred on bourgeois parliamentarianism). This doesn't mean that we were wrong to emphasise the question of the 'General Strike' slogan, when a general strike was an immediate possibility. But emphasis on a correct position can lead to ultra-leftism (or in different circumstances opportunism) when the objective situation changes. We must learn how to live with the changes in reality which are inevitably richer and more varied than our thought or theories.
- g) The LP and LPYS also provides a training ground for comrades. In the LP we will be forced to argue for our ideas against the right wing and against the 'Militant' group. A training ground for comrades is extremely important for the sharpening of ideas, and such a ground is not provided for sufficiently by union work and left front type forums. In the LP our comrades will have to learn how to talk to, explain to and argue with sympathetic workers, raw idealistic youth and right wing bureaucrats. We will have to learn how to defend the politics of Workers Fight on a whole different number of levels.

2. LP Organisations

- a) The LP is an electoral machine dedicated to organising leg-work for both national and local elections.
- b) The basic unit of organisation is the ward, which covers the local electoral division. The wards send delegates and resolutions to the Constituency LP, i.e. the organisational unit which covers the national electoral division.
- c) The constituency LP is far more political than the Ward, which is often very parochial. It elects candidates for parliament, it sends delegates to the national conference and sends resolutions here, there and everywhere. The Constituency LP has delegates from TU branches in its area.
- d) In a large city where there is more than one constituency, there is a Borough Party, which has delegates from the constituencies and is usually concerned with local council affairs.
- e) Regional organisations exist but they are not really important.

f) There is a womens' organisation which can elect delegates to the constituency LP. The importance of the womens' organisations vary from area to area but they might well be worth investigating.

g) The LPYS is the most political organisation of the LP and it usually meets weekly. It should be organised on a constituency basis but often combines several constituencies. It sends delegates to the constituency party. It holds regional and national conferences. It is heavily infiltrated by the RSL ("Militant") who maintain it at a small introverted discussion level. In their own words they want the LPYS to be a "school for Marxism". This is quite correct except that the RSL in fact mean it to be a "classroom for Marxism". If it is to be a real school for Marxism then its activity must be linked with the struggles of all those oppressed by capitalism.

3. Our Tactics

Our emphasis in the LP and LPYS must be a campaigning one. That ^{is} we fight for support for political campaigns such as the NW24, Ireland, and against the Tory Rents Act. We attempt to recruit to the LPYS and also to Workers Fight by turning the branches outward, in contrast to the passive discussion orientation of the RSL.

This means a concentration on the LPYS which because of its more political nature can be used as a 'stepping stone' to Workers' Fight. If no LPYS branch exists then we can volunteer to set one up - this may well be a necessary starting point for gaining a base. If our cdes. are too old to be LPYS members then it is often quite easy to become the Youth Officer of the constituency party.

We should emphasise political discussion at all levels and in this connection, a useful position to aim for is Education Officer of the constituency or ward. This position, however, is second best to Youth Officer. Sometimes a local newsletter can be initiated.

We can also aim at becoming TU branch delegates to the constituency LP, which provides a 'footing' in the Party without doing a load of routine work.

4. Building the LPYS.

a) Turn outwards and recruit on the basis of campaigns.

b) Fight within the LPYS branches for certain campaigns - i.e. in solidarity with strikes or tenant struggles, against racialism or fascist meetings, on Ireland (Withdraw the troops campaigns - particularly relevant to certain areas), or around such issues as the NW24. By fighting ^{for} and initiating such campaigns we will at the same time be fighting for our politics - thus the aim of building 'Workers Fight' and also building the LPYS branches are in no way contradictory.

c) It may be possible to involve students through University or College Labour Clubs, but very often there are a lot more political areas in the colleges.

d) Sell Workers Fight publications around cafes, parks, Techs and other places where young people meet. 'Workers Fight' at the moment is not a paper primarily directed towards this sort of LPYS work, but it should still be used in this way. We plan to start a monthly paper before long which will be specifically directed towards LPYS work.

e) Social activity (regular discos, one off dances, folk clubs). These should arise when the LPYS grows and our cdes. don't have to do all the work. It is useful and important for working class youth but not in the manner of the SLL as a substitute for politics or as a way of starting branches.

f) Use regional and national conferences as a way of contacting other LPYS branches.

5. Work in the LP

- a) This must take second place to LPYS work but may well be as important depending on the area - for example in Clay Cross, an exceptional situation would make work in the LP an absolute priority.
- b) The essence once again is to turn outwards - in the wards to the tenants associations and in the constituencies to more political campaigns.
- c) Fight for and initiate education programmes and a local newsletter.
- d) Recruit from broad campaigns around working class struggles on the basis of fighting within the Labour Party to make it truly responsible to the interests of the working class. Clearly if there were to be major turn of the class towards the LP then this would be our major emphasis, but as was pointed out this is not the prime perspective for entry work. However as with all other questions regarding the LP their is tremendous local unevenness and in some areas it may well be the correct approach. If we could see an immediate possibility of turning the LP machine into a weapon of the class, even in a very localised and partial manner, then it would be entirely correct and necessary to recruit to the LP in this way.

6) Cautionary Notes.

- a) The LP is not a "left group". It is based on the link with the trade unions and the massive silent, and very often grudging, loyalty of the working class. Activity ebbs and flows but the working class trade union base of the LP remains. So that, although there may be only half a dozen members present at a ward meeting, there will be massive turnout when the necessity arises.
- b) A lot of LP members are politically confused and will listen to our arguments if they are presented properly, in an expository rather than an accusatory manner - but remember they do have a strong class loyalty to the LP, which should not be confused with any loyalty to the LP leadership.
- c) Activity is slow and electoral in emphasis.
- d) We must not then rush in and kick over the table at the first meeting. We can learn and teach more by listening and by throwing in the odd question than by making long speeches with the nth degree of theoretical exactitude.
- f) It is not immoral to sit and to listen. To pick out the most class conscious members, to explain our politics to them honestly and at the same time avoid falling into the hands of the right wing. 'Workers Fight' is not a proscribed organisation and recent trends would indicate that we don't have to be as careful as was the case ten years ago - but we have to be aware of the dangers nonetheless.
- g) We are entering the LP, a hostile bourgeois party, in order to build up Workers Fight. If the tactic is carried out seriously then we can transform the group both numerically and qualitatively in terms of the training of our cadres. Tact and careful planning are of the essence - we do not want to foul up our tactic before we get started.

Dave Spencer

WHY THE LABOUR PARTY?

Workers Fight has decided to operate a partial entry tactic in relation to the Labour Party. This decision was argued for on the basis of such considerations as the training of our cadres, the immediate tasks of building Workers Fight and connected with this the necessity of a 'milieu' in which to work. However it is also necessary to know why we have to relate to the Labour Party, quite apart from the immediate tactical situation. We have to understand the relationship between the Labour Party and the working class and the relationship between the trade union struggle of the working class and the broader political struggle.

Firstly it must be understood that if a worker votes for Labour or thinks of himself being "Labour", then this doesn't by any stretch of the imagination mean that he holds consistent parliamentary illusions or that he places full faith in the Labour Party.

It is worth illustrating this rather obvious point with an example. Last year while the dockers were picketing Chobham Farm Cold Stores, prior to the jailing of the Pentonville 5, I went down to the picket to sell the paper. Talking to the dockers I raised the question of the General Strike. All around us were men who were just dying to see the cops lay a finger on Steer, Turner, Watkins, Williams or Clancy. It was as if the dockers thought that here was a chance to beat the police to a pulp or throw them in the mirror. And yet in the discussion on the General Strike the same aggressive, self assertive spirit, while being reflected on the part of the dockers in their willingness to bring everyone out together, was negated by the statement "still even if we won it'd only be Labour that would get in and that wouldn't make any difference".

This last statement is very interesting because of all the internal contradictions it suggests. We can enumerate them as follows:

- 1 ... we will smash the police
 - 2 ... we will make a general strike
 - 3 ... we have no confidence in Labour
- BUT
- 1.... Labour's bound to get in
 - 2 ... I'll be one of the people putting in it
 - 3 ... If it isn't Tory it has got to be Labour

The first group of statements express the greatest optimism and combativity and appear to show a degree of political far-sightedness and ideological clarity. But the second group of statements, all part of the same conversation, display pessimism, defeatism, passivity and confusion.

Why this confusion? What is the nature of the contrast between the defeatist and the self confident statements? Simply this: the defeatist statements relate to questions concerned with the running of society as a whole, while the self-confident ones relate to questions concerned with the dockers' own struggle and that of their immediate associates. In other words the reaction to the immediate and to a degree fragmentary questions was positive; the reaction to the distant and nation-wide, society-wide questions was not.

Can we say that the docker was clear about the immediate tasks but confused about the long term ones? Partly, but it is more complex because the limits of the immediate were defined by the confusion about the long term.

Faced with an immediate situation the docker felt confident and competent, but faced with the idea of elaborating an alternative to the government or a programme for the whole of society he lapsed back into what was familiar.

To say that this docker had illusions about Labour is about as useful as a hole in the head. After all his idea that Labour and Tory are the same is true (as far as their political characterisation is concerned), while his assumption, implied in the fact that he was sure they would get in again, that he would vote for them next time round seems to contradict this. The illusions, if that is what we are to call them, are these:

- 1 ... that parliamentary elections is the way you get governments (after all for all the talk of a general strike, he was still thinking about voting).
- 2 ... that the working class is not sufficiently creative, intelligent and united to throw up a form of government which will at least be held to protect their gains.

The illusions then are much more to do with the very general ideas about class potential which are inseparable from consciousness and feelings of confidence, than they are to do with ideas like "Labour will get me Socialism", "Labour always protects the working man" or "Labour would be all right without Wilson". The people

who put forward the idea of "Labour to power with Socialist Policies" obviously believe that the illusions consist of quite specific ideas about the Labour Party rather than general ideas about parliamentary democracy.

What I have said about this conversation with a docker can be applied to the working class' attitude towards Labour and politics as a whole. The immediate, that is trade union sphere, can reveal great militancy, while the parliamentary sphere reveals it not at all. But we are dealing with one and the same person. The militant trade unionist is in no way debarred from being passive in relation to what he would call politics.

In a period when the working class has received a whole number of blows this distinction becomes sharper. That is, the militant faced with nation-wide, society-wide attacks (Housing Finance Act, IR Act, Phases 1,2 & 3 etc,) feels, given the sell-outs of the trade union leaders, incapable of radically changing their situation, without a society-wide answer being found. And who are the boys who give society-wide answers? The parliamentary parties. And that means Labour.

It is therefore likely that the attention of the working class will be focused on the Labour Party. But this shouldn't be misunderstood. The "turn towards Labour is not so tangible a thing as many imagine. It does not manifest itself in the eight old age pensioners and a cat of venerable memory being replaced by a thousand steaming militants. It means that the class will be looking towards the Labour party, observing and evaluating and this will result in marginally greater activity in the Labour organisations.

If we see the holding back of the fragmentary trade union struggle from its most favourable outcome (i.e. in particular a general strike). If we see this perspective as, if not impossible then increasingly unlikely, then we have to relate to the alternative, 'normal' form of society wide focus, the programme and the organisation that the class looks towards.

This is what we mean by a "programmatic relationship". We realise that it is Labour, and Labour's programme, that we have to relate to ... and primarily by contrast to our programme.

This involves us, given the tactical situation (our size, lack of periphery, lack of trained cadres) in both a partial entry tactic and - this is an essential weapon in our hands - an action programme. We will in this way both avoid the arid "LP to power with Socialist Policies" idea, which has no programmatic basis and the ultra left stand-offishness of those who will not get to grips with the spectre of the Labour Party as it presents itself to the vast majority of the working class.