

**MARXISM
OR
QUACKERY?**

(The politics of the DCF)

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and Martin Thomas**

**WORKERS FIGHT
Special bulletin**

25p

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18

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19

WILKINSON

20

WILKINSON

21

WILKINSON

22

WILKINSON

23

WILKINSON

24

WILKINSON

25

WILKINSON

26

WILKINSON

27

WILKINSON

28

WILKINSON

29

WILKINSON

30

PART 3: BOLTON AND WORKERS' FIGHT: THE PRE-HISTORY OF THE DCF	52
"The Local Work has made you lose sight"	53
Mass Work, United Fronts & the Leninist organisation	56
After the Tenants Movement	57
Summing up the Period to 1973 Conference	57
The Case of John Cunningham	57
The 1973 Conference	58
"The Correct Marxist Perspective"	59
RR and The Discussion	60
The Extended NC, 19--8--73	60
After the Extended NC: Problems	61
The Question of Manchester/Bolton Fusion	61
Early 1974: Hopes of Improvement	62
RR as Students Union President	63
The Decision To Fuse Manchester/Bolton: June 1974	64
From Parochialism to Cliquism	64
The 1974 Conference	65
How We Tried to Fuse the Branches	66
Increasing Friction	68
The Question of the Branch Committee	69
The Recruitment of ND & EM	70
The Manchester Area Branch, September 1974	72
The Regional Meeting 6-10-74 & the NC meeting of 26-10-74	73
The DCF Erupts	74
Where is RR Going?	76
Afterword: The Question of Cliquism	78
The Entry into IS, 1968	79
The Carver Clique, 1969 to 1971	79
The Jones-Polan Clique	79
The League for a Workers Republic	80
Conclusion	80
Appendix 1: Secr. Minutes 20-1-73 on ND & EM	80
Appendix 2: Letter Proposing the Expulsion of RR	83
Appendix 3: Letter on RR's Expulsion from SM to ND	84
THE PERSECUTION AND MARTYRDOM OF THE PROPHET RATCLIFFE	87
RR as Scapegoat?	89
JS's "Evidence"	90
The NW Regional Meeting 6-10-74: RR, James Burnham, and the NF	91
John Strauther	93
To Sum Up; The Real Campaign of Defamation, and where it comes from	94
PART 4: WHERE IS THE DCF GOING?	95

FOREWORD

On 2-3-75 the Steering Committee unanimously passed the resolution cited as appendix to this foreword. This document is its result.

It is, unfortunately, a long document. But it is easier to jot down rubbish than to dissect it and analyse it meticulously. That is what we felt needed doing. On issues such as economic analysis many comrades - most comrades - defer to 'experts' as the only alternative to many years of study.

Since 1973 we have been plagued with an eruption of quackery. Ed. Ratcliffe has dressed up in the robes and pretensions of a prophet and an expert in economic analysis, attempting to saddle the group with perspectives and analyses which amounted to no more than a touchingly naive demonstration that the comrade knew so little of what he was writing about that the very scope and dimensions of it all escaped him. But Ed. Ratcliffe is an impressive comrade, and many comrades were taken in, including initially one of the authors of this document. Thus a merciless exposure of the almost incredible illiteracy of RR was necessary.

RR's perspectives, his very conception of what a 'perspective' is for a Marxist organisation, could only spell disaster for the group. RR is not an isolated comrade, playing anachronistically somewhere in an attic with ideas to which Karl Marx himself gave their quietus already in the 1840s. For three years he has led the Bolton branch; for two years he has counterposed himself to the leadership of the organisation and refused all attempts to integrate him into collective work; for the last six months or so he has sabotaged the Greater Manchester branch. With the DCF he has set himself to fight to impose his conceptions and a leadership dominated by them on WF. He cannot complain, therefore, if we take him seriously enough to put him under a microscope before the eyes of the membership of the whole group. Especially so since the SC has made every effort, right up to a final attempt (see p. 84) by the writer of this introduction - whom the DCF present as their chief persecutor - to avoid the necessarily destructive continued development of a faction fight.

DEMOCRATIC CENTRALISM

Since long before 1973, from early 1972 in fact, the group has been plagued with a virulent anti-democratic-centralist parochialism in the old Bolton branch. Logically the Bolton comrades, and RR specifically, have stood for a federalist conception of WF. ** Effectively this has disrupted and vitiated the group in the whole area.

These two elements, parochialism with massive elements of cliquism, together with the growing belief of Ed. Ratcliffe that he has the philosophers' stone in his pocket, have made for an incipient cult in Bolton - only now it is no longer incipient. The problem, as documented in section 3, has long been under review by the SC, even before 1973. We have been proved incapable of healing the situation, of integrating RR into the leadership of the organisation, or, finally, of preventing the factional situation from blowing up. We have paid for those failures in local ineffectiveness and are now paying in the faction fight. There are, however, lessons to be learnt. The section of the document on the history of the Bolton phenomenon is really a close examination of three years of WF history which we hope will be generally educational for the group as a whole.

TROTSKYISM - AND PRE-MARXIST SOCIALISM

What is at stake between the SC and the DCF is no less than the nature and indeed the future of WF. Modern 'Trotskyism' is made up of the political codifications of the early Comintern, buttressed by the analyses and polemics of the anti-Stalinist

** Maybe, despite all appearances that the leading comrades of the DCF have in common an almost total lack of a sense of humour, they are mocking themselves when they take the name "Democratic Centralist" Faction. But no. The people who can publish a document with a portrait of Trotsky surrounded by the heavy black border of mourning - for the contents of the document? - are capable only of unconscious humour and unwitting self-mockery!

rearguard of the Communist International, which have survived as the possessions of feeble organisations into an age markedly different and without a CI or a Trotsky or even an experienced and educated cadre of any substance to deal with the new problems after world war 2. Our movement has had a vast and truly terrible experience of the emergence of cults, sects, and political quackery - in which primitive evangelical dogmatism, the antithesis of everything that Marxism was, is, and must be, has been a raging syphilitic plague.

It is this sort of evangelical quackery that the DCF represents - only their level of politics is fundamentally pre-Trotskyist, indeed pre-Marxist, as is demonstrated in part 1 of this document. The identikit portrait of RR which can be extracted from Karl Marx's obituary of P-J Proudhon, one of the most influential pre-Marxist socialist doctrinaires, is a veritable snapshot - and that is no accident.

"Proudhon's earliest efforts I no longer remember. His school work about the Universal Language shows with what little ceremony he attacked problems for the solution of which he lacked the first elements of knowledge.... Science for him reduces itself to the slender proportions of a scientific formula; he a man in search of formulas... (he is) beneath the economists since, as a philosopher who has at his elbow a magic formula, he thought he could dispense with going into purely economic details; beneath the socialists, because he has neither courage enough nor insight enough to rise, be it even speculatively, above the bourgeois horizon.... The style (of 'The Philosophy of Poverty', in reply to which Marx wrote 'The Poverty of Philosophy') is often what the French call ampoulo (bombastic). High-sounding speculative jargon... appears regularly on the scene when his Gallic acuteness of understanding fails him. A self-advertising, self-glorifying, boastful tone and especially the twaddle about 'science' and sham display of it, which are always so unedifying, are continually screaming in one's ears... Add to this the clumsy distasteful erudition of the self-taught, whose natural pride in his own original thought has already been broken and who now, as a parvenu (upstart) of science feels it necessary to bolster himself up with what he is not and has not, then the mentality of the petty bourgeois who in an indecently brutal way - and neither acutely nor profoundly nor even correctly - attacks a man like Cabet (Etienne Cabet, an utopian communist) to be respected for his practical attitude towards the proletariat..... Proudhon had a natural inclination for dialectics. But as he never grasped really scientific dialectics he never got further than sophistry. In fact this hung together with his petty bourgeois point of view... The petty bourgeois is composed of On The One Hand and On The Other Hand. This is so in his economic interests and therefore in his politics, in his scientific, religious, and artistic views. It is so in his morals, in everything. He is a living contradiction. If like Proudhon, he is in addition a gifted man, he will soon learn to play with his own contradictions and develop them according to circumstances... Charlatanism in science and accommodation in politics are inseparable from such a point of view. There only remains one governing motive, the vanity of the subject, and the only question for him... is the success of the moment, the attention of the day..."

(Marx to J B Schweitzer, 24-1-1865)

WF has been built and has developed - politically as well as organisationally - in a perpetual battle to move away from, slough off, and rise above primitive dogmatism. And it must be said that our primitive dogmatism was that of so-called 'orthodox Trotskyism', not the pre-Marxist socialism with strands of 'Trotskyism' of RR, and we were never cultists, nor ever believers that a philosopher's stone existed, much less that we possessed it. We have moved away from 'orthodox Trotskyism' towards an attempt to rediscover and apply the method and politics of Trotsky and the early CI, and we will not now go backwards to the politics of the socialist sects of the 1830s, led by the prophet Ratcliffe!

Of course RR doesn't want us to do that. A very big part of the problem is that he knows not what he represents, what he wants, or where he is heading. The other DCF members know it even less. In the document we show, I believe, what RR's and the DCF's politics are, and what the DCF is.

THE NATURE OF THIS DOCUMENT

Most of this document was written and even stencilled before the expulsion of RR and JS. That RR's sabotage of our attempt to fuse with the RMC left us no alternative but to first suspend him and then, by unanimous NC vote, to expol him, is unfortunate, but not our responsibility. It would have been better for him to be in the group when this document is published. The NC decision to give him a copy and circulate any reply he wishes to write will partly compensate for that.

This is a 'nasty' document, written, frankly, from the promise that RR was lost to WF and could best now serve the group's interests by having his pretentious quackery mercilessly dissected in front of the whole group. The SCttcc, has tolerated RR for years, made concession after concession to him. One of the SC's members, himself a victim of slanderous dofamation by the DCF (see p. 94) was prepared even when most of this document was already written to propose to RR that the factionalism be called off in favour of constructive discussion. At this point in time the SC has a right and a duty to treat RR as a subject for dissection.

Anyone who disrupts, sabotages, slanders, and would, if allowed to, destroy WF, is an enemy and deserves no quarter. There are comrades who feel sorry for RR. It is sad. So is RR. But shed your tears for the comrades whose work in the Manchester area has been disrupted and who have been subjected to the vonom of ND & EM, with RR giving them cover. Feel sorry that the group nationally has had to waste time and resources dealing with RR and his clique, the so-called DCF. On its merits the platform of the DCF would merit a half hour discussion and the compilation of a booklist for the DCF comrades to work through - no more. It is od. RR's responsibility that things have reached this stage - even if, as is probably true, he follows the more vigorous DCF members rather than leading them. Like the Duke of Plaza-Toro, RR leads the DCF from behind. But without him, his cover and his pretentions, the DCF couldn't exist. It is his responsibility - and he is not a child, but a man in his 30s.

THE FACTION FIGHT

Other comrades have argued for an amicable 'separation', even a 'nice', non-nasty expulsion. If RR had faced the fact, two years ago, that he didn't have the commitment for membership, and said so, then things could have been 'amicable'; if he was expelled it would have been a token and a formality to underline and insist on group norms. He has chosen otherwise and ends up in a rotten block with the poisonous, slanderous, professional ma content John Strauthor and the ego-centric, disruptive, ch nic individualists ND & EM. He has declared a faction and produced a provocative and slanderous document. He responded to a proposal that the SC be asked (by me*) to wipe the slate clean and ignore the provocations in the platform, only replying coolly and objectively to the politics (such as they are) , by publicly breaking with the group the very next day.

To propose an amicable separation is, in these circumstances, to propose a bloodless beheading. Portia thwarted Shylock by sticking to the letter of the law and allowing him the right to cut his pound of flesh - on condition that he stuck literally to the contract and drew not one drop of blood. But to thwart him was her intontion.

We would gladly have avoided nastiness with RR if he had let us. The SC spent months manoeuvring to avoid a confrontation because we know - and said- where it would lead. RR and the DCF ovidently didn't, and interpreted our efforts as a lack of confidence in ourselves. But there is no such thing as a bloodless faction fight. It is not possible to take a text like RR's on women and analyse it with the express purpose of showing its author to be a pretentious illiterate - and do it nicely!

Anyone who thinks it is is living in dreamland. Anyone who flinches from it now,

or is swayed by personal sympathy for RR, is being irresponsible towards the group. For us the first law and the overriding law is the needs of the revolutionary struggle of the working class, and unlike RR we see WF, now, as central to those needs. If RR wants to start the journey back towards revolutionary politics and WF, then he will meet with encouragement from us. If he can find it in himself to look coldly at what he had done and what he has written - and indeed, at the people he is consorting with, JS and ND - and return as a disciplined member of the organisation, then it will not be as a disgraced 'capitulator' - no-one would demand formal, or even informal, self-disavowal from him - but as someone deserving of respect for his sincerity and revolutionary integrity. That is his choice and his responsibility; for our part, we were still, within the limits decreed by political principle, trying to conciliate him up to the eve of his public break with the group.

Finally, the references to MT's role in educating the group in the problems of the women's liberation movement appear on my insistence, ed. Thomas refusing to take responsibility for using the comparison between himself and RR (p.18) Yet for any serious member of the group there can be no more damning indictment of RR than his scurrilous attack on MT. While RR has at best been indifferent to the subject, MT has worked consistently to educate the group and the readers of our paper on the question. With the exception of an NC dispute on tactics for the IS Rank & File conference, in which MT would now agree he was mistaken, he has an impeccable record on the question, one rivalled only by PB, and way ahead of any male member of the group. RR's attack on him is a scandal - scurrilous, disloyal, and motivated by factional opportunism. That alone would 'justify' the merciless treatment RR's pretentious screed receives in the document. Those inclined to feel sorry for RR would do worse than keep that in mind.

SEAN MATGAMNA

(National Secretary)

22-4-75

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STEERING COMMITTEE RESOLUTION, 2-3-75.

Our movement recognises and attaches considerable importance to the distinction between a tendency and a faction, namely that a tendency is an ideological grouping organised for an ideological discussion, and a faction is a tightly knit group with the goal of fighting for the control of the group in an immediate sense. We consider that the declaration of the "DCF" is merely the continuation of the anarchistic disruption which has paralysed WF in the Manchester area for the last 6 months if not longer. This is neither a tendency nor a faction, but, in its central nucleus, the old Ratcliffe clique attempting to give itself a political rationalisation. What it stand for and what it says is not summed up in the name they assume, "Democratic Centralist Faction" (which even they must realise to be a sarcasm in bad taste against themselves), but would be better expressed as "Home Rule for Bolton" Faction.

However, it is the absolute right of the comrades involved to declare a faction if they choose.

The character of the platform is such that it is an assault not only on the individuals on the Steering Committee but on the SC as such (and also on the NC, if we exclude RR, a recently co-opted member). The members of the SC will respond to it not by declaring a faction but simply by commissioning a reply in the name of the SC.

Let us reiterate our conception of what is demanded of the officers of a democratic centralist group in a situation like this. It is that the machine of the group is neutral. There are no special privileges for the established leadership as opposed to any opposition. It means absolute parity in the use of the group machine and resources for the dissemination of the views of both sides internally. We will adhere absolutely strictly to this.

We remind the DCF that the central group facilities are available for circulation of documents, and furthermore we insist on these two points: that factional material be not circulated outside the group, and that every member of

the group, including, specifically, the centre, has a right to receive promptly a copy of material the DCF circulates in the group.

The unpublished replies on 'Wages for Housework' by EM and RR were produced in Bolton and circulated, with the agreement of the SC members available, to non-members of the group. The document, however, contained an introduction which was factional in the extreme and which the SC members had not seen. It appeared as a joint attack on the group by a member of our NC and a non-member of WF. It is essential to maintain the norms of democratic centralism - broken in that introduction - regarding taking the differences and the venomous animosities in the group outside it.

Further, whatever was said by the editor to RR about his article being too long, this committee wants to make it plain that it would have been unconditionally opposed to the publication of that article, however short it had been, on the grounds that it is reactionary.

The machinery is neutral. Nonetheless, the people who make up this 'machinery' are not. We intend to strip away the political camouflage from the Bolton clique. The SC as such has therefore commissioned a reply.

* * * * *

NOTE: For purposes of reference to the DCF platform, we have numbered its pages, starting with the foreword (page 1), and including the blank pages. The last blank page is then no. 44.

THE LIBERATION OF WOMEN

"The abolition of religion as people's illusory happiness is the demand for their real happiness. The demand to abandon illusions about their condition is a demand to abandon a condition which requires illusions. The criticism of religion is thus in embryo a criticism of the vale of tears whose halo is religion.

"Criticism has plucked imaginary flowers from the chain, not so that man will wear the chain that is without fantasy or consolation but so that he will throw it off and pluck the living flower."

(Marx: Towards a Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right - Introduction)

Against the socialist criticism which plucks the imaginary flowers from the chains of domestic drudgery, RR sets out to defend womankind.

After giving his account of the development of the antagonisms within the family - on which we shall later come back in detail - RR launches forth.

"But many fail to recognise the antagonisms within the family and the revolutionary implications of the women's struggle".

Does RR understand the revolutionary implications of the women's struggle? We shall see.

He attacks the "bourgeois" (bourgeois?) illusion "that kings, princes etc shaped history".

"But... since women were enslaved and kept at essential work, all recorded history, until recently, has been male history, (male history? as opposed to bourgeois history, or are "male" and "bourgeois" the same for RR?) and has shared the illusions of all periods; that '... men have played a greater role in human history'".

In reality,

"It is precisely because the classes (??) of women were doing the essential tasks (?) that men were free to become leaders, thinkers, poets, inventors, historians, and even revolutionaries."

This, RR thinks, should lead "the thoughtful and serious marxist" to reject the male view of history.

Let us see, "thoughtful and serious Marxist".

1) What were "the essential tasks", "essential work"? Housework?? It is unclear but implied. It is untrue.

2) What about the male slaves/serfs/workers?? The women of the ruling class had and have slaves and servants. But RR - consistently, not just once or twice - refers to the "class" of women, and uses the terms "male" and "bourgeois" apparently interchangeably. It is difficult to make sense of this except in terms of RR seeking the most "extreme feminist" terms he can to "add force" to his polemic. But in doing so he throws overboard the most elementary ideas of Marxism on the class struggle.

3) Actually RR downgrades women, with a sentimental whine as apology. Women, for RR, played an indispensable role in servicing "leaders, thinkers... and even revolutionaries". In fact, the evidence is that women played the primary role in the initial development of agriculture, and in more recent times have participated in a major way in every revolution, at least since the 18th century. Who started the Russian Revolution of 1917? Women strikers!

Later RR denounces MT for not mentioning that women have been in the vanguard of important events. RR, however, doesn't mention it either. Why not? Elsewhere he explicitly accepts the opposite view.

"Behind every great man there stands a woman"... It just so happens that there is an element of truth in that statement even though MT may not want to believe it"

"Such is MT's contempt for women that he doesn't want to believe it", says RR, the self-appointed defender of women against MT's "contempt". MT doesn't "want to believe that women have had historical importance, have played considerable roles in the development of society; he doesn't want to believe that the home is part of society".

RR sets out to console, to proclaim the importance of the home, to say that through the home - that is, through playing a servicing role - women have their important role. But MT really believes, or mean to say, that the home isn't part of society. His idea of course was the contrast between men in the sphere of the world of affairs and women confined to the home. MT wants to see a movement of men and women to free women, so he doesn't want to deny women's slavery or tell the Eileen Murphys of the group or the world that housewifery is a praiseworthy or acceptable vocation or ambition. MT described the reality of men and women in the world and in the home. To say this description is "contempt for women" is slanderous.

On the contrary, the contempt, contempt awash with petty bourgeois sentimentality admittedly, is to be found with those who would tell women that all that's wrong is lack of recognition and status. That is not what's wrong. It's not a matter of putting or not putting the right flowers on the chains of petty domestic drudgery. The chains are the problem.

4) Or are they, for RR? His views on the future of housework are set out later on, on page 3.

"Housework will cease to be seen as petty precisely because it will be seen as an essential part of everyday life...".

"But we need to recognise that 'trifles', 'pottiness' and 'drudgery' will be around for a long time because they DO NOT DESCRIBE WORK BUT ATTITUDES. They are subjective considerations of objectively necessary work".

RR does concede that housework may be done by "machines", "squads of men and women", "or individuals who choose to do it". But apart from that, housework remains in RR's socialist vision of the future. The reality of housework remains; all that is changed is attitudes. Instead of protesting against housework, struggling to minimise it and divide it up, to abolish it as a separate occupation, people will accept it as essential and therefore (?) not at all drudgery.

Usually we hear this sort of thing, not as part of a socialist programme, but as part of Tory propaganda, under the title "The Dignity of Labour"...

RR attacks "many", who

"urge the women not to assert their importance to society but to accept the male view that they are insignificant, that their lives are petty and dull, that they must play a 'greater role in human history' as men do." (page 1)

Are women confined to petty or dull chores, or aren't they? RR appears to say no, and he slips in a general hang-dog "class" view here - the same is said of workers.

"It is a bourgeois, idealist dream that men were born for better things than to disturb dust" (p.2)

Well, do we say to someone who spends his life stirring dust that it's fine, nice, beautiful work, contributing ever so much to the great triumphs of civilisation - and that only a toffee-nosed bourgeois swine would deny it? No we do not. The toffee-nosed bourgeois swine do. So do those who want to placate and shore up the status quo of women's role in housework resort to stuff like "the hand that rocks the cradle..." etc. We say, despite their contribution to human development before their enslavement and even after it, women are relegated to an inferior role. We say - and Oscar Wilde puts it well - that no-one should spend their life stirring dust. We pluck the flowers from the chain.

Has RR ever encountered the resistance of conservative and brainwashed workers on being told they are exploited - resistance to facing the brutal fact of their degradation, a wish to cling to consoling illusions. Marxists strip away illusions - but RR objects.

Far from understanding the revolutionary implications of the women's struggle, RR makes himself the advocate of conservative, consoling illusions. He does not sink (or, in terms of intellectual rigour, rise) to the level of the plainly reactionary slogan 'Wages for Housework'. Yet the tendency is in that direction. His version of the emancipation of women is a sort of "separate but equal" emancipation - a matter of combatting the male or bourgeois views which downgrade housework. Actually it is a 'socialist' version of Victorian cant.

Kate Millett presents John Ruskin's views as follows:

"However silly and old-fashioned his phraseology may appear, his tactic is perennially popular; it re-emerged in more sophisticated terms in the period of reaction which set in with the 1930s. He immediately renounces all claims to speak of the 'superiority' of one sex to another, as if they could be compared in similar things. 'Each has what the other has not; each completes the other. They are in nothing alike, and the happiness and perfection of both depends on each asking and receiving from the other what the other only can give'." ('Sexual Politics' p.93)

Millett comments:

"This sounds nice enough until one remembers it is the threadbare tactic of justifying social and temperamental differences by biological ones. For the sexes are inherently in everything alike, save reproductive systems, secondary sexual characteristics, orgasmic capacity, and genetic and morphological structure. Perhaps the only things they can uniquely exchange are semen and transudate. One would like to be sure it was not upon this method of barter that Ruskin intended to construct his social economy." (ibid.)

John Ruskin expressed his "separate but equal" views in a framework of medieval flummery ("the queenly power of women") - RR expresses his in "proletarian socialist" flummery.

In common there is a sticky sentimentality. One could wish that instead of scanning the 'German Ideology' for phrases and half-sentences to make a nonsense out of, RR had understood one or two of the ideas of Marx and Engels; had understood, for a start, that revolution isn't a matter of changing attitudes but of changing the real conditions of life; and (for EM's instruction, particularly) that socialism isn't a matter of seeking out the "good sides" of categories of class society such as housework.

"Let us see now ^{to} what modifications M. Proudhon subjects Hegel's dialectics when he applies it to political economy.

"For him, M. Proudhon, every economic category has two sides - one good, one bad. He looks upon these categories as the petty bourgeois looks upon the great men of history: Napoleon was a great man; he did a lot of good; he also did a lot of harm.

"The good side and the bad side, the advantages and the drawbacks, taken together form for M. Proudhon the contradiction in every economic category.

"The problem to be solved: to keep the good side, while eliminating the bad" ('Poverty of Philosophy' p.111)

Thus for EM - and RR endorses her contribution - housework has bad sides - "relationships are distorted and exploited" - but also good sides - "affection.. pleasure.. children", and "sexual experience", which is not, EM earnestly informs us, "petty drudgery". And we must be careful to keep the good side.

In another respect RR's approach resembles Proudhon's - in his fabulous account of the development of the family.

"We see that M. Proudhon's 'historical and descriptive method' is applicable to everything, it answers everything, explains everything. If it is a question above all of explaining historically 'the genesis of an economic idea', it postulates a man who proposes to other men, 'his collaborators in various functions', that they perform this act of genesis and that is the end of it." ('Poverty of Philosophy' p. 34/5)

Let us now turn to RR's account of the development of the family.

"UNTIL MARX (OR RR...) CAME ALONG"

".. it is a male and bourgeois view that sees housework as outside the world of human endeavour. It is the disdainful contempt of ruling class ideology which sees the 'never ending treadmill' that the masses have been forced to walk by the class nature of society, as trivial and petty. It is seen as so trivial and petty that it scarcely warranted a mention until Marx came along. It was so trivial and petty that only the actions of princes and kings was deemed as important and worthy of mention".

"Not just a male view, it is a male and bourgeois view". Why bourgeois? What about pre-bourgeois society, the great historical bulk of class society? In fact RR is ignoring the difference between aristocratic or slave-owner disdain for labour and the typical bourgeois glorification of labour.

"Laborare est orare. (To labour is to pray). By the Puritan moralist the ancient maxim is repeated with a new and intenser significance. The labour which he idealises is not simply a requirement imposed by nature, or a punishment for the sin of Adam. It is itself a kind of ascetic discipline, more rigorous than that demanded of any order of mendicants - a discipline imposed by the will of God, and to be undergone, not in solitude, but in the punctual discharge of secular duties. It is not merely an economic means, to be laid aside when physical needs have been satisfied. It is a spiritual end, for in it alone can the soul find health, and it must be continued as an ethical duty long after it has ceased to be a material necessity.."

(R H Tawney, 'Religion & the Rise of Capitalism'
p. 240)

Even slavery's apologists, however, recognised the importance to society of the labour of slaves, which they disdained and felt degrading, but hardly seriously considered 'trivial and petty'. The point is not that they called often degrading debilitating labour 'trivial and petty', but that they exploited it. The most odious bourgeois ideologists have been those who console the slaves of class society with talk of the dignity of labour.

Did it really need Marx to "come along" to point out the importance of productive labour? Does RR really believe no historians before Marx ever did anything more than chronicle the doings of kings?

Actually RR blurs over all historical stages, fuses the whole of history with a sentimental whining about 'us poor drudges', the ill-treated masses (just as housework and social productive labour are merged into one by the same sentimentality). "Bourgeois", apparently, functions as a synonym for all ruling classes, of all periods. All distinctions are ignored, and RR weeps for the sad lot of the 'plebs' of all ages.

The same failure to see classes concretely is actually in the cover of the pamphlet. Woman-slave no. 1 has a husband "out at the pub", while woman-slave no. 2 has a husband developing the theory of relativity! Not very witty, but politically very stupid.

In the first place, if the cartoon proves anything, it is the opposite of RR's argument. The drudgery of woman-slave no. 2 is not in the least relieved by the fact that her husband is developing the theory of relativity, nor will it be relieved if she has RR standing beside her holding forth on the great historic role her housework plays, how much it contributes to the theory of relativity, how only ruling-class thinkers would consider it petty drudgery, etc. etc.

In the second place - are there no such things as classes in society? Is there no relationship between classes and education and theorising? Not that Einstein never entered a pub, not that only workers do, and moreover never theorise, - but the cover directs us towards a view of society as a classless mass, divided only into women slaving (sorry, doing valuable, non-degrading, non-petty, work) at home, and men occupying themselves (according to choice?) by going to the pub or developing the theory of relativity. If you think we exaggerate, read further below, on 'THE DIVISION OF LABOUR: 2'

"THE FIRST HISTORICAL ACT"

RR proceeds to let us in on the secret that for human life food, drink, clothing and habitation are needed. In case we - beings from the planet Mars who neither eat nor drink, who go around naked and live in the open air? - want to dispute this, he brings in a weighty half sentence from Karl Marx to silence anyone who thinks otherwise.

That RR solemnly quotes Marx to prove that we need to eat and drink is on a par with the idea that housewives need to be told that housework is work. (It might also have convinced Marx he should have replaced his sardonic jibes at the Young Hegelian philosophers with a treatment in the same style of lugubrious pomposity that RR affects... ~~to~~ to avoid being quoted in such a manner!)

The "first historical act", then, "is the production of the means to satisfy these needs" (eating, drinking, etc.)

The "second point" - "as soon as that need is fulfilled, new needs are made".

"And thirdly", "'which from the very first' becomes a factor"(??) is "that women and men begin to make other women and men". Marx has to be quoted against to buttress this section - for members of the group under the age of seven!

Has RR never heard of the theory of evolution? Before man began to produce he was a gatherer, before that there were aeons in which man evolved from other forms of life.* RR's version reads like it owes more to the Biblical fable about the six days than to Darwin. RR's man, like Robinson Crusoe, first produces, then expands his needs, and then, unlike "poor Robinson Crusoe", begins to procreate. (Though RR does concede - and it is his only concession to evolution - that procreation was "a factor" (!) from the "very first").

If we try to make sense of what RR is thinking, we can see a pattern here, a pattern reproduced throughout the documents. The model of first produce the means to satisfy needs of food, drink, etc., then create expanded needs, then procreate, is of course the pattern of nuclear family life under our system road backwards into history! - first go out to work, then get a bit of money, then marry.

THE DIVISION OF LABOUR: 1

RR's section on the division of labour is even more strange. After the first, second, and third 'acts':

"It is in this (?) way that the very first social relationships were created on the basis of this (?) natural (?) division of labour. All other divisions of labour, and thus classes, are based upon this (?) fundamental division of labour. Even though the (?) family can later be subordinated to other social relationships and divisions of labour".

The only sense that can be made of this is that the division of labour as understood by RR allots to women the function of 'producing' children! Women are biological machines - which is what the worst reactionaries say! This is extremely ignorant. In the early development of mankind "the family" was not the unit. (Again RR reads the present back onto the past). And it is slanderous; women are not biological machines - in fact, women are credited with discovering agriculture and the domestication of animals, developments which revolutionised human life.

THE DIVISION OF LABOUR: 2

But we may be slandering, misrepresenting, persecuting RR - or doing him the undeserved compliment of treating what he writes as if he knows what he is talking about and means what he says). Because immediately following - after a remark on the need for research on the "act or acts" which led to women's enslavement - he presents another view of the division of labour.

"... this much can be said: that the essential and fundamental pre-requisites of human life (air, earth, water??) were thrust upon (?) this newly

* For a discussion of the relationship between man's activity in production, before production became the basis of social life, ^{and} evolution, see Engels, "The Role of Labour in the Evolution from Ape to Man",

subordinated class (?). Just as class society later subordinated both male and females to slave labour, and on the basis of this enforced labour secured the necessary prerequisites, the day to day needs of human existence, so man enslaved woman and on the basis of this enforced slavery, secured the day to day needs of human existence and freed himself to pursue other things. But this freedom to create, develop, invent, etc was only obtained at the expense of enslaving his mate and creating antagonisms within the family, resulting in the need to bind women to men; laws, deterrents, and punishments."

First he talks of division of labour. Then it all apparently devolves upon the enslaved women. Were the men all plumed peacocks, lounging around? In savage society?? What "other things" did man pursue before class society? RR paints a picture of women slaving away doing all the work, while the men become a leisure class 'creating, developing, inventing, etc.' - "just as" the Athonian leisure class formed itself on the basis of slave labour. Here we have a few phrases taken out of Marxist texts and used for a ponderous literal reading (which we must assume even RR himself doesn't understand the implications of), rather like the Maoists taking the ideas of Engels and Lenin about the "labour aristocracy" to deny workers in advanced capitalist countries are exploited.

RR's account of the enslavement of women is less like Marxism than the speculations about "a Robinson Crusoe" with which Duhring explained the origins of class exploitation.

"The Adam, who is here called Robinson Crusoe, makes his second Adam, - Man Friday - drudge for all he is worth. But why does Friday toil more than is necessary for his own maintenance? To this question, too, Marx step by step provides an answer. But this answer is far too long-winded for the two men. The matter is settled in a trice: Crusoe 'oppresses' Friday, compels him 'to render economic service as a slave or a tool', and maintains him, but 'only as a tool'. With these latest 'creative turns' of his, Herr Duhring kills as it were two birds with one stone. Firstly, he saves himself the trouble of explaining the various forms of distribution which have hitherto existed, their differences and their causes; taken in the lump, they are simply of no account - they rest on oppression, on force. We shall have to deal with this before long. Secondly, he thereby transfers the whole theory of distribution from the sphere of economics to that of morality and law..."

(Engels, 'Anti-Duhring', p.187)

And likewise for RR; Adam 'enforces' his enslavement of Eve, creates 'laws, deterrents, punishments' in order to gain freedom to create, etc. If the various different forms of the family are of interest to RR - or if he is even aware that different forms have existed - that isn't apparent.

Bebel summarises Engels' account, which is more long-winded, but in return more informative.

"According to the mother-right, i.e. so long as descent followed only in female line, the custom was that the gentile relatives inherited from the deceased gentile fellow-members on the mother's side. The property remained in the gens. The children of the deceased father did not belong to his gens, but to that of the mother: accordingly, they did not inherit from the father; at his death his property fell back to his own gens. Under the new conditions, where the father was the property-holder, i.e. the owner of herds and slaves, of weapons and utensils, and where he had become a handicraftsman, or merchant, his property, so long as he was still considered of the gens of his mother, fell after his death, not to his own children, but to his brothers and sisters, and to the children of his sisters, or to the successors of his sisters. His own children went away empty-handed. The pressure to change such a state of things was, accordingly, powerful; - and it was changed. Thereupon a condition arose that was not yet monogamy, but that approximated it; there arose the 'pairing family'. A certain man lived with a certain woman, and the children, born of that

relations were that couple's own children. These pairing families increased in the measure in which the marriage inhibitions, that flowed from the gentile constitution, hampered marriage, and in which the above mentioned economic grounds rendered desirable this new form of family life. Personal property accorded ill with the old condition of things, which rested upon the community of goods. Both rank and occupation now decidedly favoured the necessity for the choice of a domicile. The production of merchandise begot commerce with neighbouring and foreign nations; and that necessitated money. It was man who led and controlled that development. His private interests had, accordingly, no longer any real points of contact with the old gentile organisation, whose interests often stood in opposition to his own. Accordingly, the importance of the gentile organisation sank ever more....

"With the dissolution of the old gentile organisation, the influence and position of women sank rapidly...."

"With the rule of private property, the subjection of woman to man, her bondage was sealed. Then came the time of disregard, even of contempt for women..."

(Bebel, 'Woman under Socialism' p.27-30)

Simone de Beauvoir expands on the period before the rise of private property:

"In any case, however strong the women were, the bondage of reproduction was a terrible handicap in the struggle against a hostile world. Pregnancy, childbirth and menstruation reduced their capacity for work and made them at times wholly dependent upon the men for protection and food. As there was obviously no birth control, and as nature failed to provide women with sterile periods like other mammalian females, closely spaced maternities must have absorbed most of their strength...."

"The support of life became for man an activity and a project through the invention of the tool; but in maternity woman remained closely bound to her body, like an animal...."

"We have just seen that woman's lot was a very hard one in the primitive horde, and doubtless there was no great effort made to compensate for the cruel disadvantages that handicapped woman. But neither was woman put upon and bullied as happened later under paternalistic auspices. No institution ratified the inequality of the sexes; indeed, there were no institutions - no property, no inheritance, no jurisprudence. Religion was neuter; worship was offered to some asexual totem."

"Institutions and the law appeared when the nomads settled down on the land and became agriculturists. Man no longer limited himself to harsh combat against hostile forces; he began to express himself through the shape he imposed upon the world, to think of the world and of himself. At this point the sexual differentiation was reflected in the structure of the human group, and it took on a special form. In agricultural communities woman was often clothed in an extraordinary prestige. This prestige is to be explained essentially by the quite new importance that the child acquired in a civilisation based on working the soil. In settling down on a certain territory, men established ownership of it, and property appeared in a collectivised form. This property required that its possessors provide a posterity, and maternity became a sacred function..."

With the development of tools and handicrafts,

"Woman was dethroned by the advent of private property, and her lot through the centuries has been bound up with private property..."

(S. de Beauvoir, 'The Second Sex' p.94,97,113)

For the historical materialists Engels and Bebel, and even for the existentialist de Beauvoir, economic development precedes and is the base of the enforced enslavement of women - rather than the other way round, as with RR

THE VIRGIN BIRTH OF EINSTEIN

RR's section on Einstein's nappies is grotesquely funny. It is also, we believe, of some significance, if comrades will be patient with us.

Y.M.T expressed not contempt for women, but angry dismissal of the consoling

bourgeois cant, expressed in Marxist phrases as RR's "The hand which is such comfortable maxims as "Behind every great man...", "The hand which is such future Einstein's backside is not begrimed with ordure but touches the glory of the future", or any other piece of conservative, 'the status quo is all right' claptrap. (RR's next theme: the anal, oral, nasal, and infant gastronomical roots of the theory of relativity!)

One particular word in RR's section on Einstein is, however, immensely revealing:

"The fact that a woman bore him from presumably a sperm of his father makes his parents at least equally significant in producing the baby Einstein.."

Presumably? "From presumably a sperm of his father"?

What are the alternative explanations RR has to offer on the origin of Einstein? Virgin birth? He has already, by displaying a need to quote Karl Marx to convince us that human beings need to eat, drink, etc. given the grounds to think he just may be considering a theory that the Steering Committee, if not most of his readers, are beings from another world or maybe 'androids' - perhaps Einstein too was a product of a cuckoo's egg from outer space? Or perhaps there was divine intervention? There are other ridiculous but logical possibilities....

The explanation of the word 'presumably', however, is only too obvious, and entirely typical of the incredibly backward worship of the nuclear family which permeates the document. RR doesn't mean to put a query over whether Einstein had a biological father, whether some man, any man impregnated Einstein's mother. No, he uses the word 'father' as a legal, formal term. The query is not whether there was a sperm, but whether it came from her legal husband (you know, the fellow who "owned" Einstein's mother, as RR puts it).

This slip is another expression of how deep in RR's consciousness the patriarchal norms, backward prejudices, and feelings of a patriarchal family are rooted. Even when scourging the failings of "a revolutionary group which fails.. to assimilate the revolutionary vanguard of a class of slaves who are heroically striving to throw off their double oppression", even when breaking the silence he maintained throughout the major discussions in the group on women's liberation and coming forward as a new-found champion of women's rights, even when seeking to pile on the demagogy and the lachrymose sentimentality for the benefit of the 'clients' he hopes to cultivate among women's liberationists, his own backwardness shows.

Trotsky wrote, in 'Marxism in Our Time', that market concepts had sunk in so deeply in American thinking that a man who owned a million dollars was referred to as "worth a million". Patriarchal attitudes - and in this case the dirtiest, nastiest, most prurient and sexually possessive sort - so permeate RR's thinking that he can't disguise it, unless he was really suggesting a virgin birth for Einstein - or unless he is willing to admit that he doesn't know what he is saying or writing and is an irresponsible windbag.

THE THEORY OF RELATIVITY

"I would conclude that not only did a woman play some part, but generations of women and men played a part in formulating the theory of relativity. And further, that their combined part was greater than that portion which Einstein himself played."

Einstein's ideas no doubt were possible only at a certain stage of scientific development, and thus rested on others' work - the work overwhelmingly of men. Einstein himself said he worked out his theory mainly through reading the philosophical works of Kant and applying their ideas to the scientific data and problems of his day. That scientific work - primarily the work of men, because of the oppression of women and their exclusion from fields such as science - in its turn rested on generations of social work of men and women, maintaining the conditions of life, developing technique etc. Who can doubt it?

But on reading RR's exposition I confess I momentarily doubted my senses - or whatever part of me is involved in trying to comprehend what I read! RR uses vague pseudo-materialist platitudes to evade specific problems, backing them up with pious tributes to the 'unseen toil' of 'generations of women and men'.

"Did Einstein get his ideas from inside his head? Or were they obtained from the outside world?"

asks RR. Now RR is an expert on "philosophy" as on most other known arts and sciences, and he is a specialist on hunting down empiricism, as readers of the DCF platform will know. So, Roy, assuming that the theory of relativity is an accurate perception of reality (and I believe it is rather more complicated than that - but I don't understand the theory: do you, by the way?), did this perception merely imprint itself on the passive brain of Einstein (and if so, why Einstein, rather than, say, his contemporary V I Lenin?). In reality, the view of knowledge and science which insists it is "obtained from the outside world", nothing to do with anything going on "inside his head", is based entirely on an empiricist model - no, on a caricature of a caricature of empiricism. Because the material world, beyond a strict limit, doesn't imprint itself on your mind with no aid from 'inside your head'. What it imprints is false; on the basis of passive reception of perceptions, or even of active, scrupulous, empirical observation, you would not arrive at the conclusion even that the world is round! You would believe it was flat.

Active theorising, manipulation of data, speculation, calculations, etc - these are necessary. In the case of Einstein's insights the active, creative role of the individual was gigantic. The point is precisely what went on in Einstein's head. Doubtless if Einstein had not developed the theory, someone else would have done so, sooner or later. In fact, however, it was Einstein who made the giant leap in thought - and it was no less a giant leap for being prepared, socially and historically conditioned, based on previous work, etc.

All the claptrap about 'us poor slaves' playing our part doesn't change that. Instead of a dialectical materialist view, understanding individual leaps on the basis of previous work within a given science, RR once again gives us a view of society as a homogenous sludge, where each of us has our own little role to play and RR to sing the glories of that role. We indict the system of class oppression that has prevented thousands more Einsteins developing. RR consoles, telling us that each of us on our daily round is in our own little way as important to human development as Einstein.

Was Einstein a great man? RR asks. Yes. Was Lenin a 'great man'? Tell us, Roy. Undoubtedly Lenin stood on the achievements of generations, and since the science of Marxism deals with the class struggle, Lenin stood a million times more directly on the lives, activities, and struggles of the generations of the world's oppressed. Yet he focused and concentrated in his consciousness - "inside his head" - an understanding that was unique and irreplaceable in its time and place. Trotsky believed the Russian Revolution of 1917 would probably have been defeated but for the individual Lenin ('History of the Russian Revolution' ch. XVI, vol.1)

RR's illiteracy and philistinism has a political logic. If housework is given its proper value, if everyone is accorded proper credit for their little part in the great achievements of humanity, if consolation is distributed properly - then (assuming for the moment that RR means what he says) the worst aspects of class oppression are dealt with. So what does a socialist do? Create a little haven within which everyone gets proper credit, in which housework is properly valued etc., in which all the right attitudes prevail. Far-fetched? Stretching RR's ideas to absurd conclusions? We shall see when we go on to discuss the platform document.

THE IDEALIST DREAMS OF SOCIALISM

"MT apparently shares the contempt of Oscar Wilde, who, at a certain stage of society's development, can say:

'Every man is born for finer things than to disturb dust'.

It is a fact that many men are born precisely to disturb dust... It is a

bourgeois, idealist dream that men were born for better things than to disturb dust..."

Further:

"You notice here Wilde's preoccupation with the importance of men, which is presumably shared by MT. Women don't come into it, it's just men who were born for finer things."

To discuss RR's "discussion" of Oscar Wilde is to probe into the most rotten section of his document. In this section he - deliberately or otherwise - comes dangerously close to gay-baiting MT, does this Women's Liberationist, as we shall see.

When Wilde talks of every "man", he uses man as the word "mankind" is used and has in mind, obviously, every worker. Or does RR, who notes Wilde's (and MT's) "preoccupation with the importance of men", really think Wilde thought it just fine for women to disturb dust as a life-long vocation? Does he really think Wilde was unaware that in fact men and women spent their lives as dustmen, miners, etc.? Does one have to point out that he was protesting against that fact, demanding something better?

But RR is not even loyal (in the sense of honest representation) with MT, let alone the long-dead socialist martyr to sexism Oscar Wilde. "It's just men..." Many women's liberationists object to words like chairman etc. Yet the word man is and has been the word used in the English language for the species, humanity. Undoubtedly this reflects male domination. But it is quite clear what Wilde and MT mean.

Using exactly the same mixture of reckless polemical zeal and playing with words as RR, 'The Newsletter', fore-runner of the Workers Press, was able to publish an article proving James Connolly was a racist. How? You see, the man had the misfortune to use the common term for the whole Irish people, who then as now were more numerous outside Ireland than within it - "the Irish race"!

And, Roy: why is it, or was it in 1891 when Wilde wrote, a "bourgeois idealist" dream that men were born to do better things than disturb dust? Was Britain in 1891 not ripe for socialist revolution? Is it not ripe now, for a rearrangement of jobs, for an elimination of the worst drudgery through automation, even for a rotation of the most unpleasant jobs? If we don't voice such "idealist dreams", how do we rally people to fight to realise them? If revolutionaries don't try to rouse workers to indignation against their present conditions, to convince them things should and can be different and better, then "Rip van Winkle" MT could sleep for 5000 years and still awake in some slave society. Where will communism come from if we don't stir the man spending his life in dust to say - I was born for better things; my class is able to organise things better?

RR implies that class society, because it is undoubtedly now in existence, is natural, at best ripening towards socialist possibilities (perhaps at the end of a long tunnel of class defeats - see section 'Bolton & WF'). If RR thinks Britain in 1891 unripe for socialism, we can reasonably ask, is it ripe now?

What can we do? If you formally "put the question" to RR like that, no doubt he will answer like we do: "prosecute the class struggle". But in the document of the DCF the class struggle gets little mention and in fact the revolutionary party is explicitly separated from the class struggle by being conceived of as placing, in its scale of priorities, personal problem-solving for its members above their duties to the class struggle. When RR comes to Oscar Wilde, he doesn't recognise a fellow-socialist shouting a protest to help rouse the forces for a socialist battle - he sees only someone lacking in a proper respect for the noble profession of stirring dust!

A bourgeois would say of Wilde that by such statements he was being an irresponsible agitator stirring up the stirrers of dirt: leave things alone, he would say, don't give the road-sweeper "ideas above his station" - don't alienate him by holding up the mirror to the realities of his life, lest he revolt.

And the "revolutionary socialist" RR? He too is outraged at Wilde - he demands first and foremost an assertion of the dignity, here and now, of the common or garden dust-stirring worker. RR winds up glorifying dust according to the same - utterly conservative - logic that leads him to glorify the isolated, anachronistic, socially wasteful petty drudgery of housework!

Many jobs are degrading, monotonous, underpaid. A socialist revolution in Britain over a hundred years ago could at least have ensured that though dust was stirred, stirring it didn't encompass the whole life's work of individuals. Already the real utopian socialists like Saint Simon understood this and Marx adopted very many of the ideas of these people. The specific illustration Wilde uses and Ratcliffe gets in a lather about wouldn't have been 'utopian' 300 years ago, let alone in the Britain of the 1890s which was "ripe" for a socialist revolution!

It is bourgeois apologists or guilt-ridden petty bourgeois who deny that certain jobs are degrading. Together with the other maxims about hands rocking the cradle and thus ruling the world, they use expressions about such workers being "the salt of the earth". The tone of RR's response is that of a dignified "son of toil" who says on reading a sentence from Wilde - "how dare you say such a thing, you are degrading me". But it is the reality that is degrading, and to reflect it accurately is a contribution to fighting the degradation that is the reality of the lives of millions of workers. In comparison to the DCF, the utopian socialist Wilde was a revolutionary prepared to face the fact of the degradation of the working class and protest at it, not pretend it wasn't so. Karl Marx considered even Honore de Balzac a revolutionary writer although he was a conscious reactionary and a monarchist. Why? He depicted reality truthfully and therefore contributed to revolutionising the reality which he depicted.

Wilde was a socialist. In contrast RR sounds like a cross between a paternalistic Tory and a secular parson. With their obsession with quotation-mongering, the DCF will, at this rate, soon be prettifying their texts with the wisdom of canting Anglican hymn books:

"All things bright and beautiful -
The good Lord made us all"

or perhaps the one about:

"T he rich man in his castle
The poor man at his gate
God gave to each his station
Placed each in his estate".

These are the appropriate anthems for the politics of RR, expressed in his document on women. Our anthem is the one which begins with the ringing exhortation:

"Arise, ye starvelings from your slumbers
Arise, ye criminals of want
For reason in revolt now thunders
And at last ends the age of cant".

Yes, ed. Ratcliffe, let us please put an end to the age of cant - here and now, and first

and foremost within WF!

The Internationale doesn't specifically mention men stirring dust - but in his comment Oscar Wilde was a thousand times nearer its spirit than is RR. Tell us, comrade of the DCF - tell us, comrade Heyes, you who fight the class struggle every day on your building site, and you too, comrades Stewart and Duffield - do you want or need the whining, canting consolations of a secular parson, or do you want to base yourselves on the ideas of communism and on the irreplaceable fight to build an organisation to win the battle for those ideas? And tell us, comrade Ratcliffe, "serious and thoughtful Marxist", do you want to be a secular parson dispensing consolation - or a revolutionary communist? You really must choose.

ECONOMIC ILLITERACIES

RR is the ("the correct"?) economics expert par excellence! He meanders and blunders through a discussion on women's liberation, and, even though forced to cut short his lucubrations by "other pressures", as he says, he can't resist giving us a final lecture of some economic "errors" he has recently noticed. Nowhere else can one find such a compact jumble of errors on elementary Marxist economics as then follows - errors that would shame an 18 year old who had attended a four-session YCL course on basic Marxism!

RR himself says of the article of MT that he criticises that "practically every sentence needs taking to pieces". Let us take RR at his word and look not at every sentence but at some of the ideas RR expresses on economic questions.

NO.1: CLASS STRUGGLE AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF TECHNIQUE

"But if you really want to free men from disturbing dust and women from the home, you have to create the conditions for the jobs to be done by other means"

And this was not possible in the 1890s? Nor now? Why not?

What, comrade teacher of "the correct" Marxist economics, is the dynamic making for technological development within capitalism, as understood by Karl Marx? It is the class struggle. It is the struggle to increase relative surplus value that drives the capitalist to innovate, mechanise, automate. It is the pressure for higher wages and the cost of labour power that drives the capitalist to develop labour-saving equipment. (An illustration of this is the relation between the USA's early technological pioneering and the relative labour shortage there. Another example is the revolution in printing techniques which among other things allows WF to produce a relatively professional-looking paper, on a basis of people learning how to print with offset litho in a week or so, while letterpress printers served a long apprenticeship. This can be traced in precise detail to the print strikes of the late '50s. Again, the development of sugar extraction from beet was a direct result of the slave revolt in Haiti.)

This is absolutely elementary. Yet RR apparently thinks that - even under capitalism - the attitude of men or women to stirring dust, their degree of tractability, their combativity on wages, their activity within the productive process to gain some control over it, does not affect the creation of other means of doing the work! Thus agitation and comments such as Wilde's are seen by RR as "bourgeois idealism", not as entering into the class struggle and, even on the level of technology and its development, contributing to transforming the possibilities. But they do, and specifically under capitalism are a major part of the dynamic making for technological innovation. After a socialist revolution conscious control and planning would take over, aiming to satisfy needs.

NO.2: SURPLUS VALUE AND SURPLUS LABOUR-TIME

"I would like to give an example of the depths of incorrectness (!) to which MT descends;

'... where the majority of the population have to give most of their working hours to an exploiter'.

Suddenly all Marx's work on analysing the position of labour as a commodity - a commodity which is SOLD daily, hourly on the same terms as any other commodity - is swept aside and workers GIVE their labour".

And where does one begin to discuss this contribution to our education? By self-consciously

and apologetically repeating that it is properly a matter for beginners' classes which we should organise round 'Young Socialist' - not a matter for serious discussion among members of our National Committee.

Workers do give some or most of their working hours to an exploiter - they are forced to do this by being proletarians. MT's point was that exploitation of the working class takes the form of a large part of their working hours being 'donated' to the capitalist whose control of the means of production enables him to exact more hours of work from the proletariat than are necessary to create wealth equivalent to their wages. Has RR never heard of exploitation or of surplus value?

"Labour" is sold on the same terms as any other commodity, RR tells us. True, but "labour" is a unique commodity. It sells at its market price (which approximates the cost of maintaining and reproducing it in given conditions and according to standards which are socially determined, including by the class struggle), but it is unlike any other commodity in that its consumption by the purchaser (the capitalist) involves human activity which creates for the capitalist value over and above the value of the "labour".

Before Marx the mystery remained unsolved of how free labourers selling their labour power on a free market, with equal rights between buyer and seller as with other transactions in commodities, produced inequality and exploitation. Bourgeois economics explained it in terms of partnership between capital and labour, and the right of capital to receive profit as its share. Socialists mainly moralised, though various attempts were made before Marx to use bourgeois economists like Ricardo as a basis for an analysis of exploitation. Marx's analysis probed into the nature of this exploitation focusing on the unique nature of labour power as a commodity unlike all others, because in use it produced more than its value, for the capitalist.

He proceeded analytically to break down the working day into necessary labour time, which created the equivalent of the value of that which the capitalist had purchased. (the cost of maintaining the worker plus dependents, i.e. of reproducing workers) and the rest of the day, surplus labour time, which is unpaid tribute exacted by the capitalist from the proletarians. The ratio of surplus labour time to necessary labour time is defined by the class struggle, and discussed at length by Marx in the chapter on the working day in volume 1 of Capital).

Workers do give some or most of their working hours to an exploiter. They are forced to, but then MT used the expression "have to". In view of all the gibberish he writes and the petty bourgeois logic and tenor of his whole document on women, one must ask RR the question - "Are workers exploited?" If they are, what is the mechanism through which the exploitation takes place, if the whole process can be described, must be described on pain of severe public reprimand from Professor Ratcliffe, as a matter of workers selling their "labour" on the same terms as any other commodity, without reference, even as cryptic as MT's, to the unique nature of that commodity? If we take RR's account, and stop there, as he does, ignorantly seizing on the word "give" to question - unintentionally! - that workers are exploited through 'giving' unpaid labour, we are back with the situation of mystification and enslavement to commodity fetishism and the near appearance of things - which is precisely what Karl Marx cleared away.

It wasn't Karl Marx, comrade Professor Ratcliffe, who discovered that "labour" was "a commodity", no more than it was Karl Marx who first thought of looking at history from an angle other than the doings of kings and so on. Karl Marx's work, basing himself upon and deepening the labour theory of value developed by David Ricardo, was to solve the mystery of "labour" as a unique commodity, through an analysis of surplus value, exploitation, and the exaction of unpaid labour from the worker by capitalists in control of the means of production without which the worker couldn't work at all.

NO.3: LABOUR AND LABOUR POWER

But more; Professor Ratcliffe, the pillar of economic rectitude lecturing MT, talks about "labour" as a commodity that is sold - a point which so far we've ignored.

Really, Roy? We've seen that RR mixes up all historic ages and periods into a general muddle and has little time for gradations, periods, distinctions. Here he does it again. When "labour" is sold you have slavery - not wage slavery, chattel slavery!

It is one of the elementary ideas of the Marxist precision that dissected pre-Marxist bourgeois economic muddle and obfuscation that what is sold is "labour power", not "labour". (See for example Engels' 1891 introduction to 'Wage Labour & Capital').

Without this distinction, the uniqueness of the commodity labour power is obscured and thus the mechanics of exploitation, within formal equality and equitable dealing, remain a mystery. It can be maintained that "labour" is sold, there is an equitable relationship, and the profit of the capitalist comes from his contribution - capital. Moreover, without the distinction you can't quantify the working day into necessary and unpaid periods of labour time. This too escapes RR. (He writes about 'labour' being sold "daily, hourly", but evidently doesn't attach significance to it).

Remember that we are not pouncing on incidental, peripheral mistakes, or being "clever" (!) at the expense of a "poor kid educating himself". No, we are discussing a document where cd. Ratcliffe sets out publicly to chop up MT's "incorrectness" - as a gratuitous and curmudgeonly addition to an ignorant screed on women's liberation motivated by nothing more noble or serious than a desire to cultivate clients for the Ratcliffe clique (sorry, "DCF"). All of this section of RR's document could have been written in the 1840s by someone with a little acquaintance with economics and no inkling of the contributions Marx was to make later. If it was coupled with the sentimental whinings it is mixed with in RR's document, be sure it would have been the work of a petty-bourgeois or undeveloped proletarian, pre-Marxist socialist.

RR, who wants to teach us Marxism and 'method', knows so little that he actually thinks the idea of labour as a commodity like any other was Marx's discovery. As was the realisation that people other than kings made history. If Einstein owed his theory of relativity to "generations of women and men", Marx apparently owed nothing to anyone, not even the great historians and economists, philosophers and utopian socialists, to whom he acknowledged his debt! I retract the jibe above about the whole thing being really appropriate for discussion in a class of 17-year old neophytes. RR's picture of history, economics and the "great man" Marx (was Marx a "great man", Roy?) who suddenly appeared on this earth to work wonders in various parts of social science without doing any preparatory work, is touchingly like the picture a ten year old Russian or Chinese child of today must hold! RR has produced an awful mess of a document - but by god he has produced, inadvertently, a truly magnificent self-portrait! In memory of the maligned Oscar Wilde, we should entitle it - "The Picture of Dorian Ratcliffe".

COMRADE RATCLIFFE'S METHOD

But finally, after blasting away with all his economic big guns, and succeeding in wounding only himself, RR does actually hit a real target! He finally finds something to criticise which merits it, and does so correctly, even if in the scholastic form of eight crisp words from Karl Marx boldly asserting the opposite.

He quotes "Jack Price" (Andrew Hornung) from the front page of a recent WF saying 'Labour is the source of all wealth'. Well done, cd. Ratcliffe! Before congratulating yourself on finally hitting some target other than your own feet, though, reflect that even when the marksman's shot hits the target a fatal ricochet is sometimes possible. So far we've seen RR in the role of pretentious ignoramus - and that's been quite instructive: the one point where he's right is even more instructive, as we shall see.

Marx did rightly insist that labour was not the source of all wealth. He was fond of quoting the 17th century writer William Petty's way of putting it - "Labour is its father and earth its mother". 'Jack Price' was of course asserting in an agitational front-page article the claims of workers against the pretensions and claims of the bosses. Perhaps he let his zeal run away with him, or maybe the article was written in the middle of the night when he was tired. He was however mistaken.

But before sentencing AH to be bound, gagged and forced to listen to a course of lectures on Ratcliffian economics, we should remember that errors inevitably creep in, and there are different standards of rigour for a party programme (like the Gotha programme) or a scientific tract, and an agitational article. In the middle of his bitter war against the Bogdanov-Lunacharsky faction of the Bolshevik party and their attempt to fuse 'Marxism' and a form of religion, Lenin still had the balance to publicly make a distinction between such systematic attempts at 'God-building' and (to take Lenin's own example) a hard-pressed Bolshevik agitator who, when challenged by a backward worker to say what his religion is,

replies "Socialism is my religion". The first was unforgiveable, the second permissible. But none of this sort of soft-headed nonsense for the hard-headed and invariably intellectually rigorous ed. Ratcliffe. No!

As for RR's comment that we have here:

"an admission of slipshod methods of thinking and writing which are alien (RR's emphasis) to the scientific methods of Marxism and the source of these (?) alien ideas is to be found in the influence of bourgeois ideology..."

- it shows, yet again, the totally non-dialectical and non-materialist view of Marxism held by RR. It implies that all knowledge is given, and if one is a "pure believer" in the right "method", accurate reflection is assured (and slips are impossible). On the contrary, knowledge of the world requires active cogitation etc. and therefore what Marxism says is that mistakes are inevitable (not to mention the possibility that one may simply be ignorant in certain fields!) For RR, 'Marxism' is what a totem is to a savage or Jesus Christ to a superstitious old woman.

But he is correct. Reading AH's article, something clicked in his head and he remembered what Marx in his critical notes on the Gotha programme had had to say. Good. But, having remembered Marx's comments, matched them with AH's statement, and found AH wanting, tell us exactly what Marx had in mind, ed. Ratcliffe!

Or, rather, tell us how it is you can pounce on AH and yourself say:

"... this much can be said: that the essential and fundamental prerequisites of human life were thrust upon this newly subordinated class" (i.e. women)

If we apply the same rigour to what you wrote as Marx did to the Gotha programme, then you do not only attribute all wealth-production to labour; you attribute full control of all the conditions of life (earth, air, water etc.) to a section of humanity! How can it be that the sharp-eyed critic of AH can do this? Or, more directly, if you know what Marx had in mind, how can you, as we saw above, discuss human history and leave out all the ages when man was a gatherer - that is, exactly the period when productive labour was not the basis of life and the role of the Earth as "mother" which, quoting Marx, you assert against AH, was paramount?

The answer is only too obvious, of course. You have absorbed bits and pieces of Marxist texts and repeat them parrot-like. You do it, in this instance correctly, unaware that your own document is a monstrous proof that you may be able to repeat phrases, or sometimes spot an error, but the conception, the idea, has entirely escaped you. You spotted the error, the gap between Karl Marx and AH, and concluded ipso facto that AH was wrong; but if you had the faintest notion of what Marx had in mind, if you had any grasp of Marx's views, then you couldn't have written the nonsense you did which, if we take it seriously, either denies or is ignorant of the theory of evolution.

We have therefore a graphic picture of RR's method - and let us remember that the comrade is a Professor of Marxist methodology as well as of economics etc. etc. That "method" is text-chopping, quotation-mongering based on a view that all answers are given, that one becomes a 'perfect master' by mastering the magic texts and 'method' (Marxism) and can then handle any subject. What a pity RR doesn't ponder the significance of the merciless demolition Marx does on the Gotha programme, and the contempt Marx and Engels frequently expressed for all system builders, instant-knowledge quacks, and people who set themselves up as 'experts' without study or respect for the subject (Proudhon, Duhring, etc.) Instead RR treats the work of these great debunkers of pretentious quackery as quotation mines from which to set up as... a quack.

That is your "method", ed. Ratcliffe - dogmatic tub-thumping which has nothing to do with science or a search for real knowledge of the real world on the basis of Marxism. RR himself is quite frank on his "method" in one of his letters to MT in 1973:

"To start with I would like to make some general remarks on the use of quotations. It seems to me from the several indications I have been receiving that some comrades frown upon the idea, as being pedantic or seeking to bolster one's argument with cullings from Marx, etc. which are out of place. I myself would greet enthusiastically the use of quotations by more members EVEN if they were out of context, as it would show that at least attempts were being made to relate day to day activity with the main body of Marxist theory."

"Marxism" is a sort of vitamin you can't get too much of! **

RR'S VISION OF THE SOCIALIST FUTURE

In WF 83 MF wrote:

"In a socialist society, the division of 'work' and 'life' would wither away. Routine drudgery would be reduced, through mechanisation, to a small minimum, and 'work' would become, not an alien imposition, but the free, self-expressing, social productive activity of human beings. It would merge with 'life'".

But RR will have no truck with these "bourgeois idealist dreams". He outlines instead his own, more dour view of the future. It sounds more like a Victorian workhouse than anything we would recognise as socialism, but RR does have half a sentence from Trotsky to back him up:

"In fact, the jobs, and thus the work, of men and women will lose their pettiness, not because mechanisation will replace them, but because specialisation will take place;

'... in the service of a common plan GRASPED AND THOUGHT OUT BY EVERY INDIVIDUAL' Trotsky *ibid.* p.17 (my emphasis - RR)"

What was Trotsky talking about in the passages from 'Problems of Everyday Life' which RR quotes? He was talking about the situation of post-revolutionary Russia, poverty-stricken and devastated by the world war and civil war. Russia, although a workers' state, was generally far more backward than the capitalist nations of western Europe. The workers' state had to accomplish by forced-march methods many of the tasks already long ago accomplished by capitalism in western Europe. Thus Trotsky stressed the need to work at the elementary tasks, the "petty jobs" of reaching a bourgeois level of culture and technique. He argued against the heady ideas of "proletarian culture" and rapid transition to communism which were widespread in the Communist Party.

But never, ever did Trotsky subscribe to the Stalinist glorification of drudgery as "socialist labour" etc. RR, though, not only presents a view closer to the Stalinists', but applies it, not to backward, beleaguered Russia, but to the advanced, technologically developed societies of western Europe! Actually he ends up recapitulating the sermons of Victorian bourgeois, the ideas of the period when western Europe was going through the elementary cultural development which the Soviet Union had to try to catch up with as best it could after the October Revolution.***

** Almost all of this section, and of the whole document, was written before RR's suspension. In the conversation I had with him the day before he broke publicly with WF, I raised the question of evolution etc. (See letter to ND). He replied that it depends on how you define production whether or not his text is a nonsense. Yes! Clearly RR blurs the period of pre-history when man was a gatherer primarily and the period when he became a producer, just as he blurs productive and non-productive labour on the question of housework now and in the socialist future. Yet again - all history is a homogenised, undifferentiated sludge for RR!

*** In places RR is positively comic:

"Of course the responsibility of 'society' will have to be interpreted and administered by real human beings, many of whom will share Martin's nausea at petty jobs but the rest of us will have to insist that the Martins and Oscar Wildes of this world do in fact give 'full attention to order and cleanliness'".

Should not RR add to the DCF platform the demand that the National Committee instruct MF to wash behind his ears?

W/17

We believe, cd. Ratcliffe, that ^{take} to/quotes from Marx as in themselves proving anything is a direct denial of the whole Marxist method. Certainly, to go to the "books" for answers to immediate concrete questions is work for a Talmudist or an evangelical Christian, rather than a Marxist. But when RR can display quotations from Marx as "proof" of gross economic errors, errors current already when Marx himself was writing, then it is quite permissible to simply throw chunks of Marx at his head.

Marx, in the 'Grundrisse', argues that in communist society, although "work cannot become a game, as Fourier would like it to be", with mechanisation and automation necessary labour can be reduced to a small minimum:

The theft of others' labour time upon which wealth depends today seems to be a miserable basis compared with this newly developed foundation that has been created by heavy industry itself. As soon as labour, in its direct form, has ceased to be the main source of wealth, then labour time ceases, and must cease, to be its standard of measurement, and thus exchange value must cease to be the measurement of use value. The surplus labour of the masses has ceased to be a condition for the development of wealth in general; in the same way that the non-labour of the few has ceased to be a condition for the development of the general powers of the human mind. Production based on exchange value therefore falls apart, and the immediate process of material production finds itself stripped of its impoverished, antagonistic form. Individuals are then in a position to develop freely. It is no longer a question of reducing the necessary labour time in order to create surplus labour, but of reducing the necessary labour of society to a minimum. The counterpart of this reduction is that all members of society can develop their education in the arts, sciences, etc. thanks to the free time and means available to all....

... the masses of the workers must appropriate their own surplus labour. When this has been done, disposable time ceases to have a contradictory character. Thus firstly, the labour time necessary will be measured by the requirements of the social individual, and secondly, social productivity will grow so rapidly that, although production is reckoned with a view to the wealth of all, the disposable time of all will increase. For real wealth is the developed productive force of all individuals. It is no longer the labour time but the disposable time which is the measure of wealth. Labour time as the measurement of wealth implies that wealth is founded on poverty, and that disposable time exists in and through opposition to surplus labour time; it implies that all an individual's time is working time, and degrades him to the level of a mere worker, and an instrument of labour. This is why the most developed machinery forces the worker to work longer hours than the savage does, or than the labourer himself when he only had the simplest and most primitive tools to work with.

('Grundrisse', McLellan's abridged edition, pages 142,144,145)

CLOSE TO GAY-BAITING

Before summing up, we shall return briefly to Oscar Wilde. Making his ridiculous fuss about Oscar Wilde's talk of "every man" deserving better than a life disturbing dust, RR went on to write:

"You notice here Wilde's preoccupation with the importance of men, which is presumably (?) shared by MT".

On my very first reading of RR's astonishing essay into the battle for women's rights I underlined this and put various question marks after certain words. The arguments and mis-constructions put on MT's article are bizarre enough. That sentence struck me on a first reading as very strange.

RR's sentence is incredibly insensitive to those facts. By linking MT to Wilde, ("presumably" etc.) it is no less incredibly insensitive - either that or it is gay-baiting MT. My first conclusion was that it was merely obtuse, and I marked it with the intention of using it to illustrate the fruitlessness of RR's pedantry (as with the bit on workers 'giving' their labour); with the same pedantic method, RR would stand convicted of gay-baiting MT!

That was my first conclusion. After probing in detail into the cesspool of paternalistic backwardness that oozes out of RR's document and out of his consciousness, I'm inclined to be less charitable. I think that sentence, too, like so much of the document (e.g. the reference to Einstein's parentage) expresses more than RR knows or than he would consciously decide to express. It must be a matter of opinion, but that's mine. It's all of a piece with the incredible backwardness of the rest of the document - and with RR's political background (and mine for that matter).

We live in 'liberated' times. However, in the SLL/WRP in the '60s, things weren't so 'liberated'. In 1960 (before RR was around, admittedly) Gerry Healy could circulate in writing inside the SLL an allegedly political commentary making much of the relationship of three people who had recently walked out, because, apparently, of the three, two were lovers and the 'odd man out' was actually 'the legal husband'. In 1962 a Labour Party youth officer was killed by a blow on the head from a youth he'd taken home... The Newsletter commented to the effect that nothing mattered to the Labour bureaucracy except a man's right wing politics... That was so blatant that it created comments of disgust in the Manchester branch of the then relatively more sane SLL - and we weren't all that emancipated, either.

In 1963 the Profumo scandal was made so much of by the SLL that week after week we campaigned on it. The political rationale was to take advantage of a political crisis for the ruling party, but frankly there was more prudence in it (comment during pub-sale: Christine Keeler's life-story will be entitled 'Life under the Tories').

These examples pre-date RR's political life - however, they sum up the political atmosphere he comes from. Unless one assumes RR is entirely free from backwardness and prejudice (!) and unless he and/or we assume the audience - the group - is entirely free from prejudice, then what we have here is gay-baiting MT. Let anyone who thinks we are at the stage where being gay or otherwise would merely register as a petty detail like the colour of MT's coat shrug and ignore it. I don't. What we have here is an exact parallel with the backwardness on women that RR couldn't suppress even when posing as a liberationist!

Gay-baiting aside, the whole RR article is a scabrous, disloyal and scandalous attack by an injured and backward patriarchalist who has never shown interest before on MT who has, together with Fran Brodie, worked consistently to educate the group on problems of women's liberation (and with Tony Brockman on gay rights).

TO SUM UP

RR's contribution to the discussion on wages for housework does not, on its merits, deserve more than a cursory reading, much less a detailed and systematic reply. Other things being equal, I would have tossed it aside once I'd read half way down the first page of pretentious and ignorant claptrap.

But other things are not "equal". The article was part of a factional manoeuvre. RR is 'intervening' to 'defend Sue Arnall' from the nasty Martin Thomas, and the factional opportunism motivating it is revealed in every line he writes on the subject. Cd. Ratcliffe is an unsolicited shyster lawyer's effort to pick up support for the so-called democratic centralist faction (which should properly be called the "Home Rule for Bolton" faction).

In the normal course of the life of any tendency disagreements such as between SA and MT would occur, hasty formulations would slip into print, over-sharp polemics would be written - and things would work themselves out in the course of discussion. Our "Home Rule for Bolton" friends, whose platform is the proof of their political bankruptcy - especially its economic sections, the field in which they consider themselves most competent and having most to contribute - have rushed to Sue's defence, "rendering her more profound", and are doing their best to give her the sort of support a noose round her neck would provide.

That their ideas on women's liberation are reactionary has, I believe, been demonstrated. And, expounding their ideas on women's liberation, they have demonstrated much else besides.

The question at issue in the struggle, and specifically on the issue of emphasising and underlining RR's ignorance, is this: are we to be a group of pretentious and ignorant holy-rollers or not? Effectively the prophet Ratcliffe and his disciple, holy John of Liverpool, want a primitive sect, with themselves at the centre. The whole history of WF, a history of a struggle to move away from this sort of politics, was what has been 'persecuting' RR - that is, fighting the cliquism and incipient cultism he represents.

To chop to pieces the ignorant rubbish RR has put out on women's liberation is not a piece of gratuitous nastiness, but a necessary surgical operation. This comrade parades in the robes of the prophet - he cannot object if we take his words and pretensions seriously enough to show them to be hollow and nonsensical and ignorant beyond belief. It is not an accident, or if it is it is a 'happy' one that on a whole number of issues he raises, it is so easy to show RR to be on a level of knowledge, 'method' etc. that pre-dates Marx. It is highly appropriate because he wants, effectively though unknowingly, to create something that would resemble one of the sects of pre-Marx socialism, albeit incorporating strands of 'Trotskyism'.

We too are ignorant, generally and in specific fields. But not too ignorant to know how ignorant we are, or to imagine Marxism is a magic key with which a 'bright lad' can master economics in... four months. We are not so ignorant of the history of the working class and socialist movement, of the ideological pre-history and history of our own, Marxist, movement, that we will follow the prophet Ratcliffe into such fields.

We know the history of 'Trotskyist' sects well enough to understand that what is at issue is the nature and political future of WF - sect or intelligent Marxist movement. In reality, taking the concrete facts into account rather than the abstract logic and ideological character of the DCF, the issue is whether WF will continue. These people explicitly want a loose and feeble federation. They also have the makings of a cult - but a wasting cult which will begin with grand declarations and, following RR's pattern, collapse....

THE LOGIC OF RR'S POLITICS

RR's mistakes, which have here been analysed in pedantic detail on the question of women, are obviously the product of ignorance, the fact that he hasn't studied his subjects. Yes - but more. Every single one of his errors, and not alone in this field, has a clear logic. They are petty bourgeois in their content and reactionary and retrograde in their logic. Every time this logic asserts itself. We need, therefore, to look for a common root, unless we are to be contented with observing the above and ascribing it all to coincidence.

Proudhon, for example, made errors through ignorance, by unceremoniously tacking difficult problems, etc. Through his ignorance-based errors, however, a definite class viewpoint, that of the petty bourgeoisie, expressed itself.

And RR? He reflects what he sees around him, looks for consolations, reads the present back a-historically into the past and has little or no vision of the future, or even of the present class struggle. Logically, if not intentionally or consciously, by his attempts at theoretical systemisation of those consolations, he counterposes reactionary cant (based on a bourgeois-conservative glorification of "labour" as sacred and deserving of respect even though the labourer be a physically and/or psychologically mutilated and exploited wage-slave) against a ruthless revolutionary criticism of reality, against debunking of illusions, against efforts to arouse the "stirrers of dust" against their condition so that they will fight to change it. What then does RR represent in terms of class and political sociology?

We hesitate to stick labels like "petty bourgeois" etc. on people, and we are not believers in a simple process of one-to-one relationship between ideas and social-economic position. Our suggestion is no more than tentative - RR's ideas reflect, with his ignorance, pretentiousness, and arrogance as medium, the psychology of an aristocratic upper layer of the proletariat whose experience is confined to small scale industry. This layer has,

throughout most of RR's life, and all his adult life, prospered under capitalism and built itself cosy nuclear-family nests. Its 'socialism' has always been of the reform now variety - through the Labour Party, through do-it-yourself direct-action reform, or even (and logically why not?) through "build your own socialist relations now, within the family". Here there is an intersection with the reformist utopianism of sections of the women's liberation movement (though it must be said that we would be hard put to find any section of the women's movement descending to such pathetic levels as the DCF).

The DCF conceive of both the family and the party as utopian self-betterment societies and havens of rest. It would only be a mild caricature of their line on the family now and the party to say they see the family as the medium for socialist struggle via transforming personal relationships and the party as a haven of rest from the pressures of life (see the section on Cadre Building).

All this is tentative, we repeat. That the DCF positions are ignorant, petty bourgeois, reactionary, and counterposed to the tasks, the methods, and even (despite the timidity with which they express themselves here) the goals of the class struggle and revolutionary socialism - that, we contend, is beyond serious argument. Unless, that is, they tell us not to take what they write seriously, that they didn't mean it or understand it (which would be the strict truth) - in which case we will reply: "Help us build a revolutionary organisation now; stop wasting your time and ours; drop your pretensions and join us in a common effort at self-education in proletarian communism through study and through involvement as a disciplined democratic centralist organisation integrated with the struggles of our class."*

A SHAMEFACED

AFTERTHOUGHT: In the laborious examination of economic illiteracies I missed one out. Yet it's just as glaring as any of the others and equally instructive. I think you will understand the reason I didn't spot it until after the stencil was typed if you try the experiment of repeating a word like "cup" or "egg" for a minute or two. The word will quickly detach itself from any reference to reality, and you'll have to make an effort to refocus your mind. The same with RR's endless talk of bourgeois and bourgeois ideology here, there, and everywhere.

When he says that AH's insistence on labour being the only source of wealth is a result of "bourgeois ideology" the utter absurdity doesn't at first register. The view that bourgeois ideology insists on labour as the only source of wealth is in parallel to the view that the bourgeoisie sees history as a matter of the doings of kings and princes - and equal nonsense! The bourgeoisie glorify work; consoling cant does have that element. The radical bourgeoisie did insist on the rights of the "active classes" to assert their claims against the rights of the landlords. The classical bourgeois economists developed a theory of value based on the idea that labour was its active source, the subjective labour theory of value of Adam Smith and the more developed theory of Ricardo which postulated the labour theory of value as the objective social regulator. Yes. But this is 1975, Roy. Capital volume 1 was published in 1867. On the basis of scientific bourgeois theory, Marx probed the nature of exploitation, and proved that the proletariat was exploited. Even before that bourgeois economic theory had degenerated into what Marx called vulgar political economy. Immediately following the publication of 'Capital', a number of bourgeois ideologists came forward, separately and independently, with a theory of value to replace that which Marx had turned against the bourgeoisie by developing it beyond Ricardo - the theory of marginal utility, with value judged according to the subjective, consumer viewpoint, not the objective, producer viewpoint of Ricardo and Marx. Thereafter economics became the most empty and vulgar of class apologetics, until the great slump forced the bourgeoisie and its thinkers, such as Keynes, to come to grips pragmatically with real problems of a system that no longer ran itself according to the principles of laissez-faire and needed state intervention, and therefore accurate perception as well as ruling class apologetics.

But since the work of Marx appeared - the real work of Marx, not RR's version of it - the bourgeois ideologists have been utterly determined to downgrade the role of labour as a producer of wealth. A vast literature against the labour theory of value has come into existence. Whatever pressure AH was under, it wasn't that of modern bourgeois ideology. More likely it was revolutionary communist zeal! Or maybe he was just tired - or like RR, or the present writer even when reading RR as critically as possible, he is not always razor sharp in his appreciation of language and its contents and implications.

PROBLEMS, AND WHAT TO DO

In the last five years or so, we have seen an upsurge in the class struggle in Britain (and internationally) bigger than anything for thirty years at least. But this has taken the form of militant direct action and a 'molecular' radicalisation of individual workers or groups of workers. The radicalisation has not been organised or structured through a development like a big left wing in the Labour Party or a serious national militant movement in industry.

The scope of the mass militant struggles is a thousand times greater than the growth of any structured left-wing organisations. And the fragmented nature of the radicalisation presents problems for revolutionaries in trying to intervene. It is difficult to find the best "points of application" for our work.

There are additional problems for Workers Fight. Normally there are three basic stages in the growth of a revolutionary organisation: the stage of working out the basic theoretical and programmatic ground-work; the stage of grouping a tight cadre nucleus on the basis of propaganda work; and turn to mass work. The three stages are never completely separate, of course: but normally there is some separation.

We have been forced to combine all three stages at the same time, to a very great extent. If we do not attempt to orientate towards the major mass struggles going on, any 'cadres' we could win on the basis of being prepared to neglect the mass struggle would be highly suspect; if we do not put an effort into cadre-building and polemic among the left, our mass work will end up as little more than fruitless hitchhiking around; and at the same time we have to carry out basic theoretical discussions like our discussion on the Fourth International.

Some groups 'solve' the confusing problems of the present period by complete routinism - the Militant plugging away with their 'socialist programme' inside the Labour Party, and the WRP with their six-evenings-a-week Workers Press selling and periodic rallies. This routinism inevitably involves political sectarianism; anything that happens outside the limits of the Labour Party, or of the WRP, is "ultra-left" or "revisionist".

The IS, having managed to gain a 'lead' as by far the biggest group on the revolutionary left back in 1968, has been able to 'solve' the problems simply by operating as a social-democratic rather than a Leninist organisation. It has its paper and its meetings, it involves itself in a pretty tepid way in most of what's going on, and it recruits on the basis of being the largest and most active group, rather than on the basis of any political intervention.

The IMG have tended to react by rushing around everywhere where there's something going on. This rushing around (together with other factors) has led to a fantastic political instability, which on any one of a dozen occasions would have blown the whole organisation apart if it were not for the unifying totem pole of "the Fourth International". However, having recruited heavily in the student arena after IS withdrew from systematic student work in early 1969, the IMG has now built itself up to a size where in certain areas (e.g. Chile solidarity) it can play a dominant role.

We have the additional problem of being smaller than our major competitors; being, in almost every major area of work, 'second comers'; being, in general, able to recruit people only if they have first come across and been disillusioned with IS, IMG, WRP, 'Militant'.

These problems of undertaking mass work while still constructing our fundamental cadre nucleus can be seen in a number of related ways:

- comrades 'dissolving' themselves into a particular area of mass struggle, without really relating WF's specific politics to that work. This tendency has been noticeable with almost all our prominent trade unionists.
- political adaptation when we relate to struggles 'from outside'.
- the "blue-arsed fly" syndrome - rushing around from meeting to meeting without

any idea of priorities, and without any clear idea of building anything from that activity; consequently comrades feeling overworked even when in fact they are not, and education being relegated to a low priority.
 - collapsing into inertia (as the reaction from the "blue-arsed fly syndrome") with no contact work, no public meetings, etc.

Over the last two and a half years we have worked out various ideas towards coming to grips with the problems.

In 1972 we discussed the "Fusion of Education and Organisation". (The basic document on this question is reprinted in a pamphlet with the Constitution and 'Where We Stand' - every comrade should have a copy). The fundamental ideas were as follows:

- a) concentrating the work of the group round a carefully selected number of national fractions, with priorities strictly laid down;
- b) a stress on building up a carefully-processed periphery of contacts, which serves as a larger gear-wheel to enable our tiny gear-wheel to mesh with the big wheel of the labour movement;
- c) a development of political education closely linked with this contact-processing.

In later discussions, we stressed the importance of comrades getting properly integrated into definite areas of work, rather than just being "the 'floating politico', putting in a nominal appearance here, there, and everywhere". In line with this stress, we adopted a national tactic of limited entry work in the Labour Party/LPYS, on the basis of turning the LP/LPYS outwards and linking up with other areas of work - i.e. industrial struggles, women's movement, Troops Out Movement, etc.

Further we noted the need for "the emphasis lying on building a base - without this, and we have been largely without this, the fractions can become a dangerous piece of self-deception".

To anyone familiar with the organisation of Workers Fight in 1972, it is incontestable that there has been a significant improvement. However, we have to judge ourselves by the standards of what is needed, not the standards of our previous inadequacies.

A great part of the reform in Workers Fight organisation which we set out to make in 1972 still remains to be accomplished. Why?

The basic reason is that the organisation is not sufficiently centralised. Firstly, in an ideological and political sense. The magazine has not yet got off the ground - that is by far the biggest failing of Workers Fight. Although the educational pamphlet produced by Bas Hardy will be useful, we need far more in the way of short, clear educational pamphlets.

As a result of the failings in educational development, WF lacks a 'middle cadre' of comrades who have a sound Trotskyist education and a firm grasp of WF's positions on all major questions; who can be trusted to take responsibility for organising a WF intervention in any but the most difficult circumstances. WF's weakness in this respect is shown by the fact that even on our National Committee there are comrades who are not familiar with the most basic literature of Trotskyism. RR himself is one of the most striking examples of this.

Secondly - and partly as a consequence of the lack of ideological centralisation - there is a lack of organisational centralisation. Fractions have not operated. The level of discipline is very low. Branches and even individuals "do their own thing" without much relation to the rest of the group.

We get a vicious circle. Many members are simply not educated in the basic politics and tactics of Workers Fight. They do not understand a lot of what the group does, and they are not able to relate building WF to their own activity. They do not have sufficient confidence to argue the odds with members of other left groups, or even, sometimes, with 'Militant' supporters. Thus activity is unplanned.

It might be worth giving an example from the London branch to concretise this. The comrade was asked about contacts in his union branch:

"... name really?"
 "Hasn't anyone buy the paper?"
 "Quite a lot of them do"
 "What do they think of it?"
 "Difficult to say, they never make any comment"
 "Hasn't anyone who seems to be sympathetic, who asks for the paper?"
 "There is one, perhaps..."
 "What's the name?"
 "I don't know..."
 "What do you mean X?"
 "That's right"
 "Have you ever talked to her seriously?"
 "I haven't got round to it..."

This comrade is so busy with his union work that it is very difficult to fit in educationals.

Comrades' activity is often haphazard and unplanned, or at least feels as if it is. Directives, instructions, requests from WF nationally appear as further, and some, external additions to the confusion. What is lacking is the 'middle cadre' which would interpret, explain and concretise the national line, and organise feedback to the central bodies (NC, SC, fractions).

The vicious circle closes with the 'centre' comrades rushing around trying to put up the confusion, constantly trying to catch up with the situation rather than planning it.

What to do about it? The key point at which to attack the problem is the building of a 'middle cadre', an 'inner wheel' of the 'concentric circles'.

The magazine is vital. On 18-3-75 the Secretariat discussed possibilities for setting up a production team for the magazine separate from the paper. This was done (as was said as far back as 1973 Conference) on getting at least one more comrade at the centre, but it looks as though that may become economically unviable.

Political schools of the type of the schools on Ireland and on women's liberation should be continued. (The next one planned is on political economy). We should produce short educational pamphlets on major questions, in the form of 'discussion papers'. (This is in hand).

The 'centre' must be strengthened to accomplish these things (despite everything the 'centre' is still operating on about the same resources in terms of personnel as it had two and a half years ago) and the leading bodies of the group must be restructured to allow more efficient operation. The setting up of the Secretariat, to free the SC and the NC for political discussion, is a first step towards this restructuring.

d) The Secretariat has now formulated proposals on industrial fractions - NHS/NUT (now plus a separate ATTI fraction, according to the vote at the last NUT frac. meeting)/Engineering/White collar. Many of these fractions are of a rather wide, catch-all nature. We thought that that would be better than the situation of having a lot of mid-fractions which in practice could exist only on paper, being too small to have any real life. While obviously the members of the Secretariat and Executive Committee have a responsibility to give assistance, it is important that other comrades also take responsibility.

It is a slightly artificial exercise to list group priorities in order: 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7 - 8 - 9 - 10 - 11 - 12 - 13 - 14 - 15 - 16 - 17 - 18 - 19 - 20 - 21 - 22 - 23 - 24 - 25 - 26 - 27 - 28 - 29 - 30 - 31 - 32 - 33 - 34 - 35 - 36 - 37 - 38 - 39 - 40 - 41 - 42 - 43 - 44 - 45 - 46 - 47 - 48 - 49 - 50 - 51 - 52 - 53 - 54 - 55 - 56 - 57 - 58 - 59 - 60 - 61 - 62 - 63 - 64 - 65 - 66 - 67 - 68 - 69 - 70 - 71 - 72 - 73 - 74 - 75 - 76 - 77 - 78 - 79 - 80 - 81 - 82 - 83 - 84 - 85 - 86 - 87 - 88 - 89 - 90 - 91 - 92 - 93 - 94 - 95 - 96 - 97 - 98 - 99 - 100 - 101 - 102 - 103 - 104 - 105 - 106 - 107 - 108 - 109 - 110 - 111 - 112 - 113 - 114 - 115 - 116 - 117 - 118 - 119 - 120 - 121 - 122 - 123 - 124 - 125 - 126 - 127 - 128 - 129 - 130 - 131 - 132 - 133 - 134 - 135 - 136 - 137 - 138 - 139 - 140 - 141 - 142 - 143 - 144 - 145 - 146 - 147 - 148 - 149 - 150 - 151 - 152 - 153 - 154 - 155 - 156 - 157 - 158 - 159 - 160 - 161 - 162 - 163 - 164 - 165 - 166 - 167 - 168 - 169 - 170 - 171 - 172 - 173 - 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1. the building of industrial fractions;
 2. work in the LPYS (and, secondarily, the LP) on the basis of turning it outwards and linking up with industrial struggles, TOM, women's movement &c;
 3. Irish solidarity work;
 4. the women's movement;
 5. work in the student arena;
 6. work specifically directed towards other left groups; attending their meetings, chasing up contacts, etc.
 7. anti-fascist work. (The DCF comrades certainly, and other comrades possibly, will be horrified that we rank anti-fascist work so low. We explain - in the section "What About the Politics?" - that we reject the DCF's implied view that fascism is already a major threat to the whole labour movement, and therefore we oppose subordinating the most urgent fight of the present moment - against reformism - to the interests of broad unity against fascism. We need not say that this does not imply support for such play-acting as that of the IMG, who justified staying at Speakers' Corner when the IS were going out to meet the NF's demonstration in London last September on the grounds that they were 'fighting reformism' by arguing with the CP at Speakers' Corner).
- All these priorities, of course, must rest on a base of essential groundwork: the production of the paper and other propaganda, internal education, contact work.

If we can carry through these measures and clarify our priorities, we will be far better placed to create in WF an efficiently-operating machine for processing contacts and educating cadres, functioning in the mass struggle according to consciously-decided plans and a clear political line.

2
CADRE-BUILDING: THE PRIMACY
OF POLITICS

The basic principle of revolutionary activism is this: that personal problems, ambitions, desires, and convenience are subordinated to the overall class aims of socialist revolution. The day-to-day pressures of bourgeois society are offset by a total commitment to the primacy of our revolutionary political aims.

That basic commitment to the primacy of politics is the ABC of 'cadre building'. Given that commitment, a comrade who is ignorant and inexperienced can be educated and trained. Without that commitment, you can read as many books as you like, have never so many years' experience; you will never be a revolutionary.

The DCF is part of the problem, rather than part of the solution. For this reason, fundamentally: its method is not that of putting political programme first, of drawing out political conclusions honestly and rigorously from all its ideas; its method is the method of dishonestly concealing political questions, indulging in horse-trading and evasion, placing personal grievances to the fore.

Honest self-criticism is useful. Sour disillusion - unfocused, shallow, un-thought-out - of the type expressed by the DCF is no use at all to a revolutionary organisation.

In James P. Cannon's book, "Speeches to the Party", comrades will find a "Speech at the 16th Convention" which contains some pretty sharp self-criticism of the SWP (the American Trotskyist party). But how had Cannon replied when the Cochran-Clarke faction began to pour scorn on the revolutionary optimism of the SWP, with the jibe "We were the children of destiny, at least in our own minds"? Cannon replied:

"A young comrade in California, one of the leading party activists, pointed the Cochranite sneer out to me and said: "What about that? If I didn't think that our party has a great future, why should I be willing to devote my life and everything I have to the party?". Anyone who low-rates the party and

crosses
 off its future sought to ask himself what he is doing in the party. Is he here on a visit?

"The party demands a lot, and you can't give a lot and risk everything unless you think the party is worth it...." ('Speeches to the Party' p.65)

Whether the DCF thinks WF is worth it is doubtful. All they can find to say for us is "one of (??) the most promising groups" (RR on housework, p.4). Their attitude, in fact, is that of the French centrist Marceau Pivort, characterised by Trotsky as follows:

"Without plumbing the gist of programmatic differences, he repeats common-places on the 'impossibility' of any one tendency 'claiming to incorporate in itself all truth'. Ergo? Live and let live. Aphorisms of this type cannot teach an advanced worker anything worthwhile; instead of courage and a sense of responsibility they can only instill indifference and weakness".

(Writings 1938/9, page 136).

We think WF is worth it. We think that, for all our failings, the achievements of WF do justify "courage and a sense of responsibility".

In the first place - and this achievement is by no means something small - we have produced a fundamentally principled political line throughout all the complex and difficult turns of the class struggle in recent years. In the major crises of the war in Ireland, in the mass strike movement over the Pentonville Five, in the present hysteria over the Common Market, we have stood out as the only, or almost the only, tendency with a Marxist political response. We are certainly not infallible. We veered towards ultra-leftism in late '72-early '73, and our initial response to Phase III, in late '73, was too passive. Those mistakes, however, are pretty small against a record of a principled Marxist policy on major questions (Ireland, General Strike, the Labour Party, workers' self-defence, the Middle East, the Fourth International, etc.), and a principled policy, moreover, which stands up to the test of sharp turns in the class struggle.

Despite the failings the fact is that we have produced more serious analytic material than any other tendency on the left in Britain. Theory is not only what appears inside the glossy covers of a magazine; it appears also in serious articles in the paper, in pamphlets, in Internal Bulletins even.

We have produced a weekly paper - and not a bad paper, by any means - being possibly the smallest Trotskyist group ever to do so. The coverage in that paper could easily stand comparison with the far greater resources of Socialist Worker, Workers Press, or Red Weekly, as regards serious analysis of major events.

We have been the only tendency, with the possibly arguable exception of the 'Chartists', to maintain, against all the odds, the elementary communist principle of revolutionary defeatism in relation to the war in Ireland.

Our contribution to the class struggle in Britain has not been contemptible. Ours was the initiative that got the Shrewsbury 24 campaign off the ground and sustained it in its early stages.

We have educated a number of comrades, not as the parrotters of phrases or apparatus-men who pass for 'cadres' in the Militant, WRP, IMG or IS, but as critically-minded Marxists who will think for themselves.

We are not complacent. Our aim, after all, is not to recreate a beautifully-formed Trotskyist grouplet within capitalism, but to overthrow capitalism. But we are certainly not prepared to throw in our hands in despair and resort to the DCF's quack medicine.

3 W H A T I S A C A D R E ?

"The ambition of the King was to form a brigade of giants, and every country was ransacked by his agents for men above the ordinary stature. These searches were not confined to Europe. No head that towered above the crowd in the bazaars of Aleppo, of Cairo, or of Surat, could escape the crimps of Frederic William. One Irishman more than seven feet high,

who was picked up in London by the Prussian ambassador, received a bounty of near thirteen hundred pounds sterling, very much more than the ambassador's salary. This extravagance was the more absurd, because a stout youth of five feet eight, who might have been procured for a few dollars, would in all probability have been a much more valuable soldier. But to Frederic William, this huge Irishman was what a brass Otho, or a Vinegar Bible, is to a collector of a different kind.

"It is remarkable, that though the main end of Frederic William's administration was to have a great military force, though his reign forms an important epoch in the history of military discipline, and though his dominant passion was the love of military display, he was yet one of the most pacific of princes. We are afraid that his aversion to war was not the effect of humanity, but was merely one of his thousand whims. His feeling about his troops seems to have resembled a miser's feeling about his money. He loved to collect them, to count them, to see them increase; but he could not find it in his heart to break in upon the precious hoard. He looked forward to some future time when his Patagonian battalions were to drive hostile infantry before them like sheep: but this future time was always receding; and it is probable that, if his life had been prolonged thirty years, his superb army would never have seen any harder service than a sham fight in the fields near Berlin." (Macaulay, 'Essays', p.659-60)

What is a cadre? It is an educated, active, disciplined member of the revolutionary organisation. Education without activity is barren, or at best academic and useful only indirectly if at all. Activity without education and the discipline of an organisation to direct it - and, for a propaganda group, without being infused with a drive to educate others in the organisation's politics - is futile and likely to be blundering (the examples are outlined elsewhere in this document: ND in anti-fascist work, EM in the women's liberation movement, RR in student politics).

Even brilliant individual activity or theoretical work, un-integrated with an organisation, is not to be encouraged: for Marxists the construction of a revolutionary party, the duty of individuals is to relate to it, subordinate to it, and build it - that is not an option. Do we need to argue this for WF in the year 1975?

Take two active, educated and dedicated individuals, for example - Trotsky before 1917, and James Connolly. Neither was an anarchist; both were members of organisations. Yet Trotsky tended to be a freelance between the factions - and his most brilliant insights and perspectives (e.g. the theory of permanent revolution) were only capable of being achieved in life because Lenin had built a cadre organisation. Trotsky, to play the role of a revolutionary in 1917 effectively, had to join that organisation.

In Connolly's case the same, only with a tragic ending. Like Trotsky, he built no cadre organisation - nor, in Ireland, did anyone else. Connolly's education, activity, and immense revolutionary resolve died with him, leaving no crystallised organisational expression. The Irish working class was left without guidance or perspective, to be led into the blind alley of today by the bourgeoisie and their opportunist labour movement allies.

Trotsky joined the Bolshevik Party in 1917. Connolly must be reckoned a very great pre-Russian Revolution communist. Today, however, we know what we mean by a cadre - we mean not just an individual endowed with this or that ability - but a soldier in a disciplined army. In fact it is not a matter of individual 'cadres', but of a cadre organisation.

Unfortunately, when the DCF talk about the subject, they sound like the vulgar economists operating with Robinson Crusoe as a model of social man. What few references there are to the political struggle in the labour movement are not in the spirit of revolutionary activists leading forward intervention; but in the spirit of a pedant wagging a restraining finger: don't criticise the Bolton Women's Liberation group (p.23-26), don't be too polemical (p.27).

don't sloganise too much (p.29), don't be too hard-and-fast on "no platform for fascists" (p.31-32), don't overstate the case for 'socialisation of housework' (p.32-4), never trust political leaders "more than you have to" (p.37), don't 'join the stampede for recruits' (p.39), don't 'lecture at' workers (p.41), above all don't force us to fight the reformists in the Labour Party (p.39).... Everywhere there is the carping, conservative cry "yes, but not too much". The DCF's "cadres" are not so much disciplined Bolshevik interventionists as a mutual self-improvement society.

* * * *

REVOLUTIONARY COMMITMENT

There is another aspect of what a cadre is - commitment. Commitment is the pre-condition for being a revolutionary. Given someone with the will to fight and to sacrifice, you can educate them. Not vice versa. The left scene in Britain today is littered with educated 'Marxists' (some of whom make a contribution...) who are not revolutionaries. He or she is a revolutionary who organises her or his life around a single goal - the victory of the working class, and the effort to prepare, necessarily in advance of the class, an instrument to secure that victory. From this everything else flows. To this everything else is subordinate. And it means literally organising one's life around that goal, making choices, exclusions, decisions. It means an everyday battle against all the pressures of proletarian life under capitalism.

If revolutionary activity were easy, the scene would not be littered with political wrecks. It is not easy. All the pressures of life bear down on the revolutionary - not just the ideological, but the practical ones, work, family, etc. To be a revolutionary presupposes overcoming the pressures to a degree here and now.

"The party" is not just an abstract ideological selection of people; it is also, as a party of a slave class must ever be, a selection on the basis of real commitment to the cause of communism, a selection of dedicated, hardened people who do rise, in one way or another, above the pressures. Rising above the pressures, however it is done, involves sacrifices, means choosing priorities, affects one's most personal life.

"We all know male revolutionaries and militants who have 'problems with their wives' yet we do nothing about these 'problems' except perhaps to advise divorce!" (p.25)

Thus our DCF comrades who want to teach us how to create cadres! What a crushing rhetorical question to put to the robots and zombies of the SC! What a powerful argument! And what a British one - what an expression of the quality of what passes for revolutionary politics and revolutionary commitment in Britain now! People who decide to become revolutionaries in other countries, like the Marxists in Tsarist Russia, decide necessarily and knowingly to face jail, torture, exile, the gallows or a bullet. The typical pattern for a Bolshevik activist was one of shortish periods of activity interrupted by long spells of jail or exile. And the DCF ask, in horror, should a British revolutionary face the break-up of an important personal relationship or a family!

Only in Britain could such an argument be put seriously: and it augurs badly for 'cadres' who can argue like that, unless they can look forward to a continuation of the soft life nominal revolutionaries have had in Britain. Can they? Or do they think they can? What happens when people have to go to jail, or to oblivion, as part of the revolutionary struggle in Britain?

Of course, we do not advocate divorce. We try to soften, reduce, avoid problems, as much as is compatible with the overriding demands of revolutionary necessity. But to react in horror is to betray oneself as a 'cadre' resembling the Irish Navy in the satirical Irish song sung by the "Dubliners":

"The Cleaner, the Mace and the Bucket,

The pride of the Irish Navy,

When the captain blows on his whistle
All the sailors go home to their boats.

"Each year they go on manoeuvres,

To prepare for defence: they are keen;
Sometimes it's the lakes of Killarney,

More often the pond on the Green.
"We are a sea-faring nation,

Defence of our land is a right,
We'll fight like the devil all morning,

Provided we're home by the night."

It is inescapable that revolutionary activity will create family problems. A man (or, less usually, a woman) can become a revolutionary and be married to, or subsequently marry, someone who isn't a revolutionary, and will not develop into one. Such unevenness is inescapable. We have such problems now - and to the degree that we grow and recruit mature people, there will be more and more such problems. There are and will be conflicts.

We have tried, do try, and will try to involve the spouses. In the overwhelming majority of cases - it can be said with certainty - we will fail, and the contact will probably embitter and engender contempt for the group. How to cope? Only lunatics will not try to minimise conflict. Again success will be limited. The group cannot create a little utopian island in which collectively we compensate for the pressures created within families and on our members by revolutionary work. We cannot turn the group into a model baby-sitting agency. If we were ten or fifty times bigger we couldn't really hope to, though we could do more.

That is the reality: to be a revolutionary means to live with it, its pressures, tensions, frictions. To think otherwise is to kid oneself. To demand that the group not only functions as a political organisation but as a utopian society within capitalism is to demand the impossible, to demand that capitalism be reformed piecemeal - and to misunderstand what we are organised for and what our priorities must be. To tell new people, as part of their education as cadres, that the group can, or should, perform such a service, is to disorientate them, to undermine their resolve. It is to tell them they can avoid bitter conflict whereas in most cases they must learn to live with it, overcome it or else fade out of politics. It is criminal sabotage of the group and political poisoning of any individual caught up in such ideas. The first thing to instill in any new comrade is that the revolution and the emancipation of our class is the first and the highest one; above everything personal; that if necessary he or she must live with conflict and tension.

The DCF would rather teach people to whine at the group for not being a refuge and a haven of niceness under capitalism. It forgets that the party must be an army in battle. If it be lunatic and inhuman to glory in conflict, then it is criminal to place such a group as compensating for such conflict on a par with the directly political tasks of the group. It will produce cadres who will collapse and desert under any major personal pressure - and why not if such things as family relations are treated as almost on a par with revolutionary activity.

No! The first thing the recruit must learn is that we are engaged in a war in which we will risk losing our lives and everything we have - and that anyone who enters this fight and is appalled at family or personal upsets is either a thoughtless fool or a dilettante.

That said, we should, within that framework, minimise the pressures, help each other, live our lives in as communist a manner as possible. No-one wants to copy the SL's machine for making militants! No-one is saying people are automats, they should have no private life or time off, etc; but it must be within clearly understood priorities.

TRAINING CADRES - OR CULTIVATING CLIENTS?

The section in the DCF platform (p.25-26) dealing with the discussion in the Manchester branch on minding Ian Heyes' child is important because of the general backwardness it expresses**. It is no less important on the question of cadre building.

IH is a new and extremely valuable comrade, formerly for a short period a member of the Communist Party. His individual political tendencies have shown a leaning towards a general distrust of organisation as a result of his experience in the trade union and in the Communist Party. (See his letter on the question of the branch committee, in the section on 'Bolton & WF'). IH is in the DCF; one purpose of the references to him in the document, the solicitousness, etc. is to tie him to the Ratcliffe clique.

We would like to win IH away from the clique/faction - but to win him on the basis of our politics, not by competing with RR in diplomacy and lawyerly servility. We will therefore discuss frankly the implications of the incident in the branch, and what the cadre-training methods of RR mean in the case of IH.

I (SM) don't remember any detailed discussion on a rota of so many hours each to mind IH's children. Either I wasn't present and RR is mixing up two incidents, or else he is caricaturing a discussion that I did witness.

In that discussion, which I remember vividly, I realised (and said so there and then) two things - (1) that RR either doesn't understand or doesn't accept the Leninist theory of the party, and (2) that he had reached such a state of demoralisation and political degeneration that his role in the branch was that of an active and vocal opponent of Leninist norms and of a scandalously unprincipled manoeuvrer who latched onto every piece of backwardness or every problem and made himself spokesman for it - something he has now found the courage to do on a broader scale before the whole group, on the question of women's liberation.

There were in September a series of four summonsed meetings of the united Manchester branch, the first three of which thrashed out in great detail the problems of the branch and of fusion. RR didn't say a great deal, nor did he advocate any alternative to the NC decision - but what he did say was very revealing. One of the most reasonable practical objections to fusion was that IH (a) had family problems and (b) would normally arrive over half an hour late for meetings in Manchester. RR made the most of this fact, delivering a homily in tones similar to the platform on the fusion driving comrades out of the group, on the need to accommodate comrades, etc. etc.

What he was actually saying - as he is saying in the platform - is that the level of membership commitment shouldn't be very high, and he was using the very real difficulties of IH to rest his case on. That is, he was using a comrade heavily burdened with family problems as the norm for the group - or trying to. I pointed out the liquidationist logic - how with such an approach we wouldn't have a press, a paper, or anything; the need to struggle to rise above the pressures of daily life under capitalism; in a case like IH's of special problems, what needed to be done was to understand and accept specific individual limits, in the given case, not to generalise and destroy membership norms. IH then agreed with me, or so I thought.

That was the actual discussion. The role of RR, who wants to teach us how to train cadres, could not have been more scandalous. Definitely there was no discussion on Ian's wife going away somewhere with him, not while I was there. But that's a small detail. The principles at stake are the same.

** "What the state of the children would have been like after two days of being passed from stranger to stranger in rapid succession, apparently occurred to hardly anyone", the DCF exclaim in horror. How do they imagine children will be cared for in a socialist society - or will each mother still be tied to her children then? Even in the primitive society of Samoa, according to Margaret Mead, "a baby whose mother has gone inland to work on the plantation is passed from hand to hand for the length of the village" ('Coming of Age in Samoa' p.40). The DCF may reply: but this is still capitalism, and children do get bewildered by strangers. OK. But it is still very strange to find male chauvinism equated with lack of understanding of child-care methods.....

It's a fine and pleasant thing if comrades' husbands, wives, lovers, can accompany them, if a political assignment can be combined with a personal outing. Even more so in a family situation where there is strain.

But RR, this 'cadre trainer', throws all objective political concerns to the winds. He blames the group - a group with far more important faults! - for its inability to organise a weekend of baby-sitting of sufficiently high standard for one comrade. He encourages a new and inexperienced member to do likewise and effectively tells him not that one must fight, but that unless ideal conditions are arranged then revolutionary responsibility can be forgotten. RR is preaching whining irresponsibility rather than revolutionary determination.

In the branch IH dissociated himself from RR's attempt to use his difficult situation for an assault on the norms of group membership. He should also dissociate himself from the sticky section of RR's platform which uses him for a politically scandalous attack on the group... AND on the working class.

An attack on the working class, because the DCF conclude with the assertion "We cannot hope to increase the worker composition of our group with attitudes so ignorant as these". Workers, say the DCF, will not enter the revolutionary struggle unless they are guaranteed a good babysitting service. Nor, apparently (page 29) unless they are guaranteed aid when they get arrested in the struggle - the DCF complain that "comrades (have been) left to fend entirely for themselves after being arrested and fined whilst on demonstrations", as if the group has an obligation to make good any trouble or expense members suffer as a result of revolutionary activity.

Fortunately there are thousands of workers who are capable of revolutionary activism and self-sacrifice beyond the sour philosophy of disillusion preached by the DCF.

CADRE OR CLIQUE?

Having outlined some main points of principle, we shall examine the DCF's section on "Cadre-Building", page by page.

They open (page 21) by quoting Conference resolutions, SM, and AH, on the lack of cadre development in WF. "So far we can agree". But already at this stage it is amazing to notice that the DCF have not even been able to pick up the most serious complaints that can and should be made against WF. The question of the magazine merits only a side-swipe against the 'inefficiency' of everyone bar the super-cadres who have, through some good fortune, developed in a small area between the M62 and the M6; on education notes, not a word; on the question of industrial fractions, not a word... The point, of course, is that the DCF is defined by "extreme, often sickly sensitivity in relation to everything that concerns their own circle, and the greatest indifference in relation to everything that concerns the rest of the world".

What follows, in fact, is a ragbag of complaints, held together ^{only} by the fact that they all connect up with the particular concerns of Bolton.

First (page 22-26) there is a section on Male Chauvinism. In their second paragraph, the DCF define the problem as they see it: "there is an almost complete lack of understanding of the problems of men and women who have children, and virtually no effort made by the group to develop ways of integrating such men and women into the group". Later, on page 25, they sum up: "To end this piece on male chauvinism we include one last example of how little many comrades in the group understand about the problems of caring for children" (this example is the episode concerning IH commented on above).

From the point of view of attracting sympathy for the DCF ^{from} from comrades who feel harrassed by domestic problems, this approach may be useful. From the point of view of communist politics, it is scandalous.

Communists and militant women's liberationists define the struggle for women's liberation as a struggle to smash the social conditions creating the oppression of women, and particularly the bourgeois family. The DCF define the struggle as one

to understand and help out with the problems of the bourgeois family. Not a struggle to overthrow capitalist conditions... but a struggle to understand and help out with the problems of capitalism.

This is not revolutionary politics, but bourgeois social work.

Logically, the DCF go on to deny the revolutionary character of the women's liberation movement. On page 23, they attack the assertion that "a reformation in this sphere (i.e. of personal day to day behaviour) will come only after the overthrow of capitalism, gradually, over generations." If the DCF's attack means anything, it means that they believe socialist standards in day-to-day personal relations can be achieved under capitalism; that is, male chauvinism and the oppression of women can be dealt with under capitalism. In which case, of course, women's liberation is just a matter of bourgeois social reform.

The arguments the DCF attack so indignantly on page 23 were outlined more thoroughly by Trotsky in 'Results and Prospects'. For the sake of explaining once again to the DCF, it may be worth quoting at length:

"But many socialist ideologues (ideologues in the bad sense of the word - those who stand everything on its head) speak of preparing the proletariat for socialism in the sense of its being morally regenerated. The proletariat, and even 'humanity' in general, must first of all cast out its old egoistical nature, and altruism must become predominant in social life, etc. As we are as yet far from such a state of affairs, and 'human nature' changes very slowly, socialism is put off for several centuries. Such a point of view probably seems very realistic and evolutionary, and so forth, but as a matter of fact it is really nothing but shallow moralising.

"It is assumed that a socialist psychology must be developed before the coming of socialism, in other words that it is possible for the masses to acquire a socialist psychology under capitalism. One must not confuse here the conscious striving towards socialism with socialist psychology. The latter presupposes the absence of egotistical motives in economic life; whereas the striving towards socialism and the struggle for it arise from the class psychology of the proletariat. However many points of contact there may be between the class psychology of the proletariat and classless socialist psychology, nevertheless a deep chasm divides them.

"The joint struggle against exploitation engenders splendid shoots of idealism, comradesly solidarity and self-sacrifice, but at the same time the individual struggle for existence, the ever-yawning abyss of poverty, the differentiation in the ranks of the workers themselves, the pressure of the ignorant masses from below, and the corrupting influence of the bourgeois parties, do not permit these splendid shoots to develop fully. For all that, in spite of his remaining philistinely egoistic, and without his exceeding in 'human' worth the average representative of the bourgeois classes, the average worker knows from experience that his simplest requirements and natural desires can be satisfied only on the ruins of the capitalist system....

"If socialism aimed at creating a new human nature within the limits of the old society it would be nothing more than a new edition of the moralistic utopias. Socialism does not aim at creating a socialist psychology as a pre-requisite to socialism but at creating socialist conditions of life as a pre-requisite to socialist psychology." ('Results & Prospects' p.229/31)

The DCF continue their complaints as follows:

"Rather than helping Eileen to 'develop her own definition of her existence and sexuality as a woman', she was quite bluntly warned of the dangers of comrades seeing themselves as 'trade unionists, or students, or black people, or women first, communists second'" (p.24)

This complaint relates to the Steering Committee comment on a leaflet which the Bolton Women's Liberation Group (With EM's cooperation) put out, defending ND's assault on TH on the grounds that it is right to hit male chauvinists. The DCF don't mention that fact. They don't mention that even ND now says he was wrong to hit TH, and presumably would agree the leaflet was wrong. They don't say

whenever they consider it a correct, democratic centralist procedure for comrades to run off to their nearest Women's Liberation Group or wherever they think they can get support to pre-empt or campaign against the policy of WF.

The DCF don't mention those points. Instead they bleat about Eileen not being given help in defining her own sexuality as a woman. Such is the DCF's conception of a revolutionary party. When a comrade acts in a flagrantly undisciplined and politically wrong way, we are supposed to say "dear, dear, poor Eileen" and settle down to a good discussion session to help her develop her own definition of her existence and sexuality.

Certainly we are in favour of changing society so that each individual can define her sexuality as freely as possible, instead of being clamped down by capitalism (though what that's got to do with the Women's Liberation Group leaflet, we don't know...). But in the meantime our group is organised to be active in the class struggle, not to act as a forum for individuals to develop their personalities.

The worst part of what the DCF say is their approval of the idea of comrades being "trade unionists, or students, or black people, or women first, communists second". This, simply, is educating comrades to consider their own personal feelings and background more important than the general revolutionary aims of our movement; it is attacking the whole conception of a Leninist party held together by a single revolutionary drive, with an iron will and discipline.

After that, we cannot give much credibility to the DCF's laborious sermons on the need to fight bourgeois ideology.

4

DOOMSDAY ECONOMICS

There follows an attack on the Open Letter (p. 26 to 28). Naturally the DCF comrades did not take part in the lengthy and open discussions over the Open Letter when it was being drafted, and naturally they do not take up any of the substantive political points in the Open Letter.

"The very first sentence 'We are already entering the most serious world capitalist recession for decades...' demands" - so the DCF exclaim - "recognition of a previously incorrect analysis by the group which in fact contradicted this sentence." On page 27, the DCF continue: "the perspectives have altered without debate, without reference to previous perspectives... no perspectives were offered to the group at the last aggregate and the analyses that were offered were referred back."

Before taking up the DCF's politics, we should correct their factual dishonesty. It is bad, to be sure, that no British political perspectives document was presented at the 1974 Conference, and that the economic perspectives documents were (with the exception of the last para. of the international perspectives document) referred back for further study. It is unfortunate that RR, who was asked by the National Committee to work on those documents, wrote not one single word, and offered not one single apology. It is nevertheless a fact that perspectives resolutions on organisation, on trade union work, on Ireland and Irish work, on the Labour Party, and on the international situation (general guidelines) were adopted by the conference, even if the Bolton comrades haven't bothered to act on them.

But what is more serious is the fact that RR evidently has absolutely no idea of what economic perspectives are. In mid-1973, we insisted on recognising that an upturn (the biggest yearly increase in industrial production for over 20 years at least) was taking place, and refused to tie ourselves to a vague perspective of capitalism collapsing in some undefined way at some undefined point in the near future. In late 1974, we recognise that we are entering the most serious world capitalist recession for decades. Where is the contradiction?

Economic perspectives, for Marxists, are not a matter of shouting "crisis" year in, year out, and then, when the crisis finally comes, turning round and crying "I told you so - but 18 months ago you wouldn't believe there was a crisis". No, for Marxists it's a bit more complicated. It's not enough just to assert the general

truth that capitalism is a crisis-racked system. We have to recognise that capitalism does have a cycle from recession to upturn; we have to locate exactly where we are in that cycle; we have to be aware of all the factors and possibilities in the situation, not just glibly declare that everything is bound to go badly for capitalism.

Just how much RR cares about "debate" on economic perspectives is shown by his reaction to PS's document (printed in IB 25). RR did not even bother to read PS's document before announcing at the NC (19.1.75) that he would write a factional counterblast. Since 19th January RR presumably has had time to read PS's document; yet in his own section on economic perspectives, in the DCF document, he makes no attempt at all to take up PS's arguments.

In this reply we shall not take up the DCF's economic arguments in detail. We do not pretend to any advanced knowledge in economics. We refer comrades to PS's document, the first part of which is in IB 25, for a more scientific study; and to articles by JW in IB20 and by PS and MT in IB 14/2 for a general criticism of RR's method in economics.

In summary: it is scarcely worth going into the details of RR's economic answers since he clearly does not even know what the question is.

"World Capitalism has entered a period of intense economic and political crisis. With the slight exceptions of temporary falterings, the Capitalist World as a whole has expanded its production without major set-back since the end of the 2nd World War. It now faces a period of contraction and instability, as attempts are made to overcome the obstacles which capitalism itself has created during the 'boom' period". (page 5)

Before there was boom; now there is doom. However, as Trotsky points out:

"Commonplaces to the effect that the present crisis is the final crisis of decay, that it constitutes the basis of the revolutionary epoch, that it can terminate only in the victory of the proletariat - such commonplaces cannot, obviously, replace a concrete analysis of economic development together with all the tactical consequences flowing therefrom....."

('First Five Years' vol. II, p.79)

In fact, not all was uninterrupted progress for capitalism from 1945 until RR took pen to paper in 1973.** In the first nine months of the 1957/8 recession, for example, industrial production declined 13.1% in the United States. Moreover, since the second world war capitalism has been overthrown in a fairly large part of the world - Eastern Europe, Korea, China, North Vietnam, Cuba... Such developments may appear as 'temporary falterings' from the heights of Chorley, but for the workers of the United States, or the workers or peasants of Cuba, for example, they were not so insignificant.

Moreover, from the point of view of the working class engaged in the day to day struggle, the fact that 1973 saw the greatest increase in industrial production since the Korean war cannot be dismissed in RR's terms as "a temporary flurry of activity".

We have searched the economic section of the DCF document in vain for any attempt at analysis of the relative prosperity which did exist overall for imperialism from world war 2 to the late '60s, or of what factors are now undercutting it. Instead we find baffling statements like the assertion that the method "often resorted to by British capitalism" to offset the trend towards crisis was devaluation. Twice since world war 2 - often ?

Or the very informative statement that it was "other factors (??) which were gathering force (?) in the monetary spheres" which really drove capitalism into crisis in 1972 (the year when, in the real world, capitalism was recovering from the 1969-71 recession...) What these "other factors" were (and other than what)

** Not the least bizarre feature of RR's economics is that he dates the end of the post-war prosperity, not from the late '60s as is generally done, but from 1972 - i.e. from round about the time when he started to study economics!

we are not told.

Or passages which sound more like a fairy tale for children:

"In 1971 the then massive US deficit of trade of \$6 billion caused by the overtrading (?) of the US with its capitalistic rivals brought to the attention of the world (??) the massive pool of dollars which had been circulating around Europe (Euro-dollars) when these dollars started to be unloaded onto various Capitalist Governments who had fixed exchange rates"

(page 9)

It is impossible to make sense of the DCF's economic arguments. All we have are various descriptions of surface manifestations of crisis woven together with pompous assertions that crisis is inevitable in capitalism to produce a completely vague perspective to the effect that a 'deep crisis is approaching'. Exactly how and when the crisis will appear - that we are not told.

'Perspectives' of this sort cannot have, and do not have, any relation to real practical conclusions. Only at one point do the DCF's economic writings indicate definite practical conclusions: that is in the material about small capitalists and the threat of fascism (see section 'The Politics of Unprincipled Combinationism...'). And there, as always, the DCF do not draw out their conclusions.

5

BUILDING A DEMOCRATIC-CENTRALIST PARTY

To return to the DCF's section on 'cadre-building'; on page 26, the DCF vigorously condemn the statement, from the Open Letter, that "This simmering crisis offers tremendous opportunities for recreating a mass revolutionary workers' movement, for building substantial revolutionary organisation..." - on the grounds that it is not guaranteed in advance that we will be able to take these opportunities. We may not be able to take the opportunities; therefore it is wrong to say that the opportunities exist! Understand it if you can...

The DCF rush to give their support to Bill Coppock - a former member of IS, now not active in revolutionary politics - on the grounds that at a WF meeting in Manchester, he also questioned the Open Letter's assertion of the need for a mass revolutionary party. They misrepresent what he said: Bill's point was not that we would be able to build a mass revolutionary party immediately (and the Open Letter doesn't say that we can). He said that he considered the concepts of mass party and revolutionary party to be incompatible. A party could be a mass party or it could be a revolutionary party, but not both.

In reply MT outlined some of the most basic ideas of Trotskyist politics. In 'normal' times it may well appear that revolutionary ideas can get through only to a few. But in weeks of stormy struggle, thousands of workers can learn more than in years of revolutionary propaganda. Once aroused, those workers will be ready for acts of revolutionary heroism far in advance of many who today consider themselves learned Marxists. If the revolutionary Marxist organisation can respond aptly and rapidly, giving structure and political direction to that revolutionary enthusiasm, then we can indeed build a mass revolutionary party; we can do more - we can overthrow capitalism. And capitalism cannot in general be overthrown without the building of a mass revolutionary party. Revolution does not occur through a small elite of the onlightened manipulating the ignorant movements of the masses, but through the self-mobilisation of millions of workers, led by a party which has substantial roots everywhere among them and in which every member knows what he or she is doing.

That perspective may seem wildly 'optimistic' - but then our revolutionary socialist aims are 'optimistic', aren't they? The attitude of the DCF is a million miles from the revolutionary optimism of the communist activist who - while never blind to the problems or the chances of defeat - sees revolutionary

opportunities as a spur to redoubled militant activity, the better to take those opportunities. Instead the spirit of the DCF is the spirit of sour disappointment and disillusionment; dismay at the failure of previous hopes of too easy successes (in 1972/3 it was RR who was heralding the immediate rise of a mass revolutionary party - see section 'Bolton & WF..' on this); a weary desire to retreat to the struggle for 'Marxism' inside the organisation (or for better babysitting and more pedantry, which seems to be what 'Marxism' means for the DCF).

DEMOCRATIC CENTRALISM

"There are more people in the WRP than there are in WF and they certainly don't consider they belong to a bureaucratic organisation, or that their leaders are capable of distortions, gross errors, bureaucratic manoeuvring, campaigns to crush internal opposition, etc. etc.

"We should learn from their blindness. And the lesson to learn is that you never trust your own leaders more than you have to". (p. 37)

Let us look at some fundamental ideas about democratic centralism.

The democracy of the democratic-centralist revolutionary organisation does not exist as a model of the workers' democracy of the future proletarian state. It exists as a practical part of an organisation which has to do a very practical job right now in present-day society.

The democratic-centralist organisation does not conduct a lengthy democratic consultation on every decision. If it did it would be completely paralysed at times of revolution or sharp social crisis. At those times, the revolutionary organisation must, above all, respond quickly and keep up with events. It cannot afford a lengthy process of consultation. It must operate on a basis of strict, top-down centralism. The October revolution would never have happened if Lenin and Trotsky had tried to conduct a leisurely discussion throughout the Bolshevik party on whether to carry out an insurrection or not.

In normal times, in legal conditions - as in WF at present - very little is done on the basis of simple central command. Almost every decision involves consultation, persuasion, argument, the possibility of appeal. Even now, however, for the organisation to operate effectively, without becoming an inward-looking talking shop, a great number of matters have to be dealt with on the basis of the central committees (NC, SC, Secretariat) deciding.

The whole membership, through the Conference, lays down the general lines of policy and elects the National Committee. Then between conferences the NC is the political decision-making body; the SC and the Secretariat deal with day-to-day and administrative matters.

To try to throw every issue out to general discussion would create, not a more democratic organisation, but a chaotic swamp in which the 'tyranny of structurelessness' would hold sway, where the loudest voice and the quickest hand on the duplicator would win, where the voice of the comrades with knowledge and experience can be drowned by demagogy, and where - most importantly - the organisation would be paralysed as a coherent force intervening in the labour movement in a planned, concerted way.

Serious revolutionaries know this. For that reason they take seriously the selection of the leadership of their organisation; they do not accept people as leaders of their organisation unless they trust them as revolutionaries.

The leadership of a revolutionary organisation, unlike the leadership of a reformist party or trade union, is not selected on the basis of careerism and a competitive scramble for privileges. Leadership positions in a revolutionary organisation do not bring privileges; on the contrary, they bring the heaviest workload, subsistence wages for the organisation's full-timers, and the position of being the target for every attack, both from the opponents of the organisation and from the grumblers within the organisation. Comrades are elected to the leading committees on the basis of their experience, their proven ability and willingness

for hard work, their political knowledge, acuteness, honesty and clarity as demonstrated in the organisation's internal discussions.

Having selected a leadership on that basis, serious revolutionaries will respect and trust that leadership because it is the day-to-day, week-to-week embodiment of the collective will of their revolutionary organisation - that revolutionary will and conception which makes our activity something more than an aimless chaos of diverse petty tasks, and which is the serious revolutionary's guiding principle. No Marxist/^{worthy} of the name believes anyone is infallible, or is prepared to leave his or her critical faculties in any Central Committee's left-luggage room. Marxists operate in a spirit of "criticism of all that exists" - including criticism of our own organisation. But we recognise that it is our own organisation, and our own leadership which embodies the collective will of that organisation between conferences - and we criticise in that spirit.

Criticism, yes: a critical approach is the very heart of Marxism. But criticism in an orderly way, criticism within the framework of loyal activity.

It is entirely possible that the leadership of a revolutionary organisation may drift towards bureaucratic methods. Very well. What is the correct approach for comrades to fight that bureaucratism? First, simply to draw attention to the bureaucratism, in a comradely fashion; that may be enough to solve the problem, or it may result in a discussion which convinces us that the fears of bureaucratism are unfounded. Then, if that fails, the bureaucratism must be fought by counterposing to the existing bureaucratic regime and policy a new policy and a new regime. But never - if we really wish to reform the organisation - by utilising backward prejudices against centralised party regimes in general. Thus in IS, ^{even} when the Cliff leadership's campaign against us was reaching the point of expulsion, we insisted:

"It is not a machine or hard 'professional' centre, as such, that is objectionable, but this machine, staffed by people with specific political attitudes, ideas and record..."

(Platform of the Trotskyist Tendency, Introduction)

Opposition to a centralised regime as such means opposition to the conception of a Leninist party, operating on the basis of a single strictly defined political outlook and with a rigorously unified will; for such a party cannot exist without a centralised regime.

But it is precisely these anti-Leninist arguments that the DCF uses in its attack on the WF 'regime'. For the DCF, the lesson to learn from the WRP is not anything specific about the WRP's politics and methods, but a general distrust of 'leaders'. Notice - it is leaders in general (however good) we should never trust, not just the (presumably bad) present leading committees of WF. This comment, like the DCF's sneering description of Manchester WF as "loyal followers", belongs less to the school of Trotskyism than the school of the Mensheviks who condemned the Bolsheviks on the grounds of the dominant role of Lenin, or of the centrists of the 1930s who refused to join forces with the Fourth Internationalist movement because they wished to remain independent from the supposed 'leader cult' of Trotsky. The lesson those latter 'learned' from the Stalinists was precisely the lesson the DCF draw from the WRP; above all to maintain a cautious and suspicious attitude. (See 'Struggle for a Proletarian Party' section 12)

The DCF's complaints about bad organisation (p.29) come from the same vein. Let us be clear - if any member of WF complains in the ordinary course of things about inefficiency at the centre, provided the complaint is made in a responsible, not nit-picking or 'holier-than-thou' way, then he or she has a right to a plain answer, without any jibes about his or her own possible personal inefficiency. But things stand differently when it is a matter of a factional complaint. Then we have to look at whether the faction that sets itself up to oppose the existing regime actually has anything better to offer.

In this context, our only reaction can be disgust when RR, recently returned from over one year's partial leave of absence, guilty time after time of neglect of the most elementary duties of a WF member (as for example attending national fraction

meetings), surrounds himself with people like ND censured for gross indiscipline, and from that position proceeds to lecture the rest of us on 'amateurism' and the need for a 'deep commitment to struggle'!

If the DCF set themselves up as the real cadre-builders, in factional opposition to the present WF 'regime', then we have a right to ask: what have they done? Who are their 'cadres'? In another section we shall look at the history of Bolton and Workers Fight - and comrades can judge just what sort of cadres, just what sort of democratic centralists, just what sort of disciplined activists, just what sort of honest fighters for definite ideas, the DCF are.

THE LABOUR PARTY

What perhaps best illustrates the DCF's approach to democratic centralism is what they say on the Labour Party:

"... it would be foolhardy to send all comrades into the LP. Instead of helping in their training, the reverse might very well take place. There are many old hands in the LP who are more than capable of making a monkey out of the unwary and untrained revolutionary" (page 39)

Why not give up revolutionary activity altogether, then? After all, it is not only in the Labour Party that we will find opponents capable of squashing inexperienced revolutionaries! As a matter of fact, the Labour Party at present is very far from being the most difficult area of political work.

Yes, in any area of political work - in the factory, in the union branch, in the Labour Party, wherever it may be - inexperienced comrades will get defeated by more capable opponents. What does a serious revolutionary do after that happens to him (or her)? He discusses with more experienced WF comrades, studies, prepares, and returns to the battle. Perhaps he gets squashed again. Again, he learns from his mistakes and comes back again fighting. And eventually he will come back to win.

Obviously, we try to give inexperienced comrades some little protection from getting 'hammered' by opponents. But it is not possible to train revolutionaries except by going through the experience of being 'hammered' and coming back fighting. And the duty of more experienced comrades is to help train our newer members so that they do go back fighting.

But what would the DCF say? "Poor Jimmy, did the reformists hammer you then. Well, we shan't allow the centre to send you back there again".

Here, as so often, the DCF acts as a sophisticated lawyer for the most backward and anti-revolutionary prejudices.

THE DCF'S "SOLUTIONS"

The DCF's recommended solutions to our problems with cadre-building are an odd collection.

A) They assert that "to us it is evident" that when the Steering Committee, the National Committee, and the WF Conference assert that cadre education must be our central task, we don't really mean it; actually we have "joined the stampede for recruits". The first step is to make 'building a cadre' a central aim, and only the DCF will do that.

B) They advocate recruiting more workers (well, that's a new idea! why didn't anyone think of that before!); but all they have to offer in the way of methods to do that is the recommendation that worker-recruits should not be lectured by 'pedantic intellectuals'. Certainly: but many workers might reasonably reply that if their aim is to avoid lectures from pedantic intellectuals, they could as well achieve that by staying out of revolutionary politics altogether.

C) They advocate changing the education system.

We have already examined the DCF's idea of what "building cadres" means, and we don't mind saying that it isn't our aim to build cadres that way. As for the DCF's assertion that our statements about the priority of building cadres in a Leninist

way are just empty words - we shall have to leave it to comrades' own judgment to assess the accuracy of the DCF's mind-reading. Notice that the DCF don't say that despite a sincere commitment to cadre education, we are pursuing methods which won't achieve that (which might be a reasonable objection); they assert we are not even trying, whether by good methods or by bad.

The DCF are simply self-contradictory on recruitment. On page 41 they insist on the need for recruiting more workers** - on a previous page (39-40) they pour scorn on "the stampede for recruits" and say that trebling the membership in one year would only achieve "a situation three times worse". While occasionally having to pay lip-service to building WF, their general attitude is to pour scorn on building WF.

As regards the educational system - it is arguable that the concentric circles system can be interpreted as well or better through small groups as through a strict one-to-one arrangement. (Indeed, it is this system which London WF operates) It is certainly arguable that we need to review the implementation of the group's educational system. But what is not arguable, within a Leninist organisation, is the philistine fear of 'indoctrination' which runs through page 42 of the DCF platform. Comrades should simply not join WF unless they have some confidence in our politics, some recognition that there is a body of 'doctrine' to be learnt, and some trust that our more experienced comrades are not sinister brain-police. The DCF's picture of the 'pupil' isolated at the end of the educational chain, spoonfed with dubious ideas, is little more than paranoia. Does this 'pupil' not attend branch meetings, or regional meetings, national conferences or day schools? Does he (or she) not speak to other WF members? Does he (or she) never read a book, or listen to members of other tendencies, or study the Internal Bulletin?

The strangest twist to the DCF's argument is that the one part of WF which did to an extent conform to their picture of the isolated 'pupils' was... the Bolton WF branch! The branch was largely isolated from the rest of WF, and RR held sway. Now they complain about the breaking up of their compact little group and its integration into broader discussions.

The 'concentric circles' system is not just some whim of the centre. It is based on certain definite ideas of the relation of a revolutionary organisation to the working class, and the way a revolutionary organisation develops - ideas set out briefly earlier in this document, and at more length in the document on "Fusion of Education and Organisation". When these ideas were discussed - at some length - in WF, RR agreed with them. We have a right to know what alternative he is counterposing if he now disagrees.

The DCF's "solutions" collapse, finally, into farce on page 43, where they advocate that "Leadership to take more part in education..." and "Paper (produced by that same leadership) to play more part in the internal education". They condemn the leadership for 'utopian idealism', gross male chauvinism, bourgeois method in economics, sloganising, bureaucratism, plain dishonesty, and much else.. and then demand that same leadership should play an increased role in the education (miseducation?) of the membership! Truly there could not be a clearer example of the DCF's failure to draw logical conclusions from what they say.

TO SUM UP

The DCF is part of the problem, not part of the solution. Their methods of factional struggle are directly miseducational in terms of cadre-building. They act as 'lawyers' for the most backward and anti-revolutionary prejudices. Their diagnosis of the problems of WF is shallow; their recommended solutions are self-contradictory and illogical. Their conception of building cadres is a conception divorced from, and indeed opposed to, revolutionary activism.

** A need which does not require to be reinforced by incorrect facts. While the remark in the 1974 Conference document on organisation, that the percentage of manual workers in WF has fallen somewhat,

the absolute number has increased, substantially.

W H A T I S A F A C T I O N ?

A revolutionary organisation is made up of a big variety of people, from different backgrounds, with different experiences. The organisation has to weld those people together into a unified instrument for a clear political programme. The first requirement for that is adequate education of the membership in the basic theoretical traditions and method of communism. The second requirement - since theory can only be sharpened and concretised in relation to ongoing activity - is lively and honest discussion within the organisation, linked to and regulated by the needs of the class struggle.

In the normal course of discussions within a revolutionary organisation, all sorts of differences will occur between individual members. In one debate, comrade A and comrade B will join forces against comrade C; in another, comrades B and C will be in agreement against A; yet again, C and A will take one side of a question, and B another.

That is how it should be, and it is to a large extent how it has been in Workers Fight. A glance through the voting records of National Committees will show dozens of disagreements; but it will also show that the make-up of majorities and minorities is not at all fixed - a comrade in the minority on one question is just as likely to be in the majority on the next question.

That is a healthy situation. For the discussion inside a revolutionary organisation to be most fruitful, it must be strictly objective; people must take sides according to the merits of the issue at stake, and not according to personal attachments and dislikes, or prejudged caucus line-ups.

However, every so often there arises a disagreement which is larger in scope. It turns out to be connected, perhaps, with a whole range of other disagreements. At any rate it leads to continuing serious debate, with a number of comrades pretty fixed in their opinions on either side of the question.

That is when the occasion arises for the formation of tendencies or factions. The comrades on one side of the debate get together to organise themselves, to produce resolutions and draft documents in common, to discuss details of their position based on the broad agreement revealed in previous debate.

Any situation where a tendency or faction is set up has dangers. The tendency or faction inevitably tends to become a party within a party. It develops its own leadership, its own meetings, its own discussions, its own discipline, its own publications. Further, once the differences have been formalised and hardened by the setting up of competing organised groups, it is far more difficult to shift people's opinions or to reach an agreement incorporating ideas from both opposing camps. And in a situation of competing organised groupings within the party, organisational and personal frictions inevitably arise and muddy the political discussion.

To ban tendencies and factions, as the Stalinists do, is no solution to those dangers; effectively it means allowing just one faction, the leadership. However, the experience of the communist and Trotskyist movement has pointed to some norms according to which a tendency or faction should operate if it really wishes to help political clarification rather than create disruption or muddy political issues; if it is a faction or tendency selected and bound together by politics and not a clique bound together by personal ties or by a common feeling of alienation from the organisation because of miscellaneous grievances of a personal or episodically political nature.

The first essential is that the tendency or faction be based on an absolutely clearly spelled-out political platform. Organisational questions may form part of the platform, but they must in general be strictly subordinate to the political line. If they feature prominently, they must be traced to their political and/or sociological roots - otherwise no-one learns anything, and least of all the 'faction'. This clear political definition ensures, as far as possible,

that the tendency or faction does not become a catch-all of all the grouser and malcontents in the organisation. It ensures, as far as possible, that the tendency or factional struggle is concerned with real political issues (including the politics of the organisational issues) rather than gossip and personal quarrels.

Secondly, that the tendency or faction relates to the revolutionary organisation, rather than fishing around for support outside the organisation. If the tendency or faction is resting for support on forces outside the revolutionary organisation, then, in the first place, the tendency or faction becomes the transmission belt for the confused or reactionary ideas of those non-Marxist forces or of hostile forces within the broader 'Marxist' movement. (Specifically, John Strauther plays such a role in relation to the IMG within the DCF mish-mash, as can be seen by comparing pages 15 to 19 of the DCF platform with the IMG Tendency A document in Red Weekly 27-2-75).

In the second place, the discussion inside the revolutionary organisation is 'guttled' of its meaning for the group as such. It becomes not so much a process of internal clarification of struggle for rectification of a political line, but an extension within the group of the warfare which is the essence of our relationship with all other groups.

Thirdly, that the tendency or faction is absolutely loyal as regards the public activity of the organisation. Otherwise the situation of "a party within a party", and the risk of a split, is not just a danger, it is a reality. And the discussion, once again, is 'guttled'; it ceases to be a discussion and becomes meshed in with the public struggle of other forces against the group. If there is not strict discipline, discussion is not so much 'free' as pointless, because no meaningful decisions can be reached from it.

Fourthly, that the tendency or faction focuses its activity on getting a decision by the organisation. That decision closes the discussion for the time being - the minority either is convinced, accepts majority discipline though unconvinced, or, if it considers that impossible, splits. Otherwise the differences simply fester, causing friction, disruption, and disintegration, but never clarification.

Fifthly, that a tendency, or - one hundred times less so - a faction, is not formed unless a serious attempt has been made to thrash out the differences through normal, non-factional discussion, and the experience of that attempt has shown absolutely no way out except forming a tendency or faction.

Sixthly, that the distinction between tendencies and factions is respected. A tendency is an ideological grouping organised for an ideological discussion. The ideological issues at stake will generally be of some major importance (otherwise a tendency would not be formed) but what is involved is a relatively cool, long-term discussion in which the tendency tries to win the members of the organisation over to its views. A tendency is an internal propaganda formation, like WF was in IS up to the last period of the fight against expulsion.

An example of a tendency is the grouping organised in the US Trotskyist movement in the late '40s by Cochran, Hansen, Kerry and others. They argued that the East European states were deformed workers' states, while the majority of the movement still believed they were capitalist. Eventually, after a discussion lasting a couple of years, the people arguing for the "deformed workers' state" theory won over the majority. That discussion can rightly be cited as a model of its kind. (The documents are largely available). However, had the tendency attempted to rope in every dissident, grumbler, grouser, malcontent, misfit, and self-esteeming genius suffering the bitter pangs of non-recognition, it might have had more organisational weight (votes), but would have defeated its own propagandist and educational objective by poisoning and sharpening the atmosphere. Instead of preparing the ground for the eventual triumph of its ideas, it would almost certainly have provoked a split in the party. The record of the later 1953 dispute within the SWP shows that it was the character of the Cochran-Clarke minority as an unprincipled combination that embittered the discussion and prepared the split. The Cochran-Hansen-Kerry tendency showed its

confidence in its ideas by refusing to chase after miscellaneous dissidents.

A faction, in contrast, is organised for a relatively heated, short-term fight - either to change the policy of the organisation on one particular issue, or (more usually) to throw out the present leadership and replace it by members of the faction.

Examples of the first type were the "military opposition" in the Bolshevik Party during the Civil War and the "Left Communist" faction round Bukharin which opposed the signing of the Brest-Litovsk peace. In both those cases, the faction was eventually reintegrated into the party after discussion. But the authority of the Bolshevik Party and its leadership, and the general ideological level of the Party, were unusually high - by far the more usual fate of a faction is split.

Such was the case with the major factions in the history of the US Trotskyist movement, examples of the second type: Burnham-Shachtman-Abern in 1939-40, Cochran-Clarke, Goldman-Morrow, etc.

THE DCF: FACTION, TENDENCY, OR WHAT?

The DCF does not correspond to a single one of the norms of Leninist politics. It is based, as we have shown, not on spelled-out politics, but on hints, half statements, evasions, horse-trading, and a ragbag of grievances.

It clearly regards the authority of Bolton Womens Liberation group as higher than that of WF. On page 24, the DCF rise up in indignation at the fact that: "Eileen... was quite bluntly warned of the dangers of comrades seeing themselves as 'trade unionists, or students, or black people or women first, communists second'". In other words, they presumably believe comrades should see themselves as women first, communists second. And on page 34 the DCF berate the Steering Committee for objecting to a leaflet put out by Bolton Womens Liberation group "on what they saw as male chauvinist attitudes among left-group members on the Bolton Anti Fascist Committee". Apparently if we fail to give automatic support to the W.L. group's attacks on the left, "we cop out of the struggle going on at ground level".

We have already noted the ideological dependence of the DCF on the IMG.

Again and again, as we shall show in a later section of this document, the DCF has ignored the discipline of WF.

The DCF clearly could not care twopence for a decision of the organisation. RR did not even consider it worthwhile to be on the National Committee, the decision making body of the organisation between conferences.

The DCF have made no attempt at all to relate to the normal channels of discussion of the group.

The DCF is neither a tendency nor a faction, in any Trotskyist sense. It is a "hands off Bolton" lobby. The only thing it has in common with a faction on the Trotskyist model is this: it is clearly heading for a split - much more so, in fact, than a serious faction even with deep political differences.

Even if all the complaints voiced by the DCF were valid (which is very far from the case!) the setting up of the DCF would be an act of extreme irresponsibility and disruption. By focussing discussion in WF round petty issues - petty in comparison to the giant historical tasks of revolutionary socialism - and carefully blurring over every important political issue of the class struggle, it makes itself a force for the miseducation of anyone it influences. It miseducates anyone influenced by it to negate the fundamental principle of revolutionary activism - to consider personal moans and groans more important than political principles.

Further, we have to examine the DCF's complaints in a different way from non-factional complaints. If an ordinary rank and file member of WF complains about failures or shortcomings in WF, then (provided that the complaint is not

made in a carping, or nit-picking, or 'holier-than-thou' way) it would be wrong to reply by demanding that the member making the complaint provides a solution, or by pointing to his or her own possibly worse failings. As committed members of WF we are discussing how to work together to solve common problems. Serious raising of questions even before a solution is perceived can be an entirely positive act, itself part of the process of the collective solution of the problem. It is a question of motive, tone, seriousness, commitment.

But if a member of IS came forward with, perhaps, exactly the same complaint against WF, we would react differently. What about your own organisation, we would reply: its faults are a million times greater. For the IS member would not be trying to see how to work together to remedy that fault in WF; he or she would be using that fault as an excuse to support IS rather than WF.

THE DCF'S COMPLAINTS

Some of the DCF's complaints about lack of cadre development in WF are without a doubt true. Indeed, they are simply quoting the statements of Steering Committee members (p. 21-22), which should be sufficient to show that on the part of the Steering Committee there is no wish to sweep those faults under the carpet. It also indicates that these super-critics have little independent criticism of the group to make, other than their pickings from the self-criticisms of the SC and NC; that their vision does not rise higher than Bolton. All they add to their pickings is an unctuous and censorious tone. The DCF, far from being able to formulate solutions for WF, have to rely on the people they attack to formulate the questions. They only stop short in quoting us when we say to the DCF people: you are part of the problem, not part of the solution.

We can't just say "that's a good point the DCF have got there". The DCF are not simply pointing out some failings with a view to helping all members of WF to work together on solving them. You don't need to form a faction to do that. They are attacking the present policy and structure and leadership and - if they are honest - proposing themselves, with their policies and methods, as the solution. Only they have no policies, other than for Bolton, and, in the case of RR and JS, little commitment even to serious activity.

WF's ailments are real. One ailment, already at the stage of gangrene, is the Bolton clique. But that doesn't mean that we should welcome everyone who appears at the door with a bottle marked 'medicine'. We have to analyse the nature of the 'medicine' and look at its effects on the people who praise its powers to cure. And if we find that the 'medicine' is simply the poisonous distillate of cliquism, then we don't lie back in bed saying "you're quite right, we are sick"; we rise up and firmly drive away the quack doctor. If we haven't got the strength to do that we are sick indeed, or, alternatively, if we say "give it a try - we need help", then we show ourselves in a state similar to people with incurable diseases, who pathetically abandon all critical thinking and resort to quacks. But there is nothing incurable about WF. Maybe even some of the DCF are 'curable'. We hope so.

WHAT DOES THE DCF WANT?

In conclusion, therefore, what is the "Democratic Centralist Faction"?

It is not a tendency. RR announced its formation (at the NC, 19-1-75) to fight to teach us "method", "the (sic?) correct" economic perspective, etc before reading Phil Semp's economic analysis, circulated in manuscript form and discussed at that NC. He might reply that he knew the cook and could ~~guess~~ reasonably predict the nature of the ~~recipe~~ 'dish' before him. Yes: but a tendency recruits on formulated ideas. Its leading spokesman does not declare it, knowing already who will be in it (i.e. the old clique plus new friends and clients) before formulating those ideas. And as we have demonstrated, the DCF has not formulated any political perspectives.

In any case, a serious tendency would relate first to the leading bodies of the group or the group as a whole, and recruit on the basis of agreement. The DCF consists almost entirely of raw comrades who probably take RR's quackery for good coin simply because RR is a good fellow. (On economics, certainly they do). The DCF is not a tendency. Nor is it a faction.

Leaving aside its tiny size and unformed organisational and political foetus state, the DCF, clearly, judging by its platform, doesn't aspire to control the group organisationally. It merely says, in a Bolton accent, "leave us alone". To fight for control of the group would imply commitment, activity, willingness to subordinate one's personal life to the tasks of the group. The leading member of the DCF, RR, would hardly do that.

If any of the DCF want to play a more active role in the organisation and leadership of the group, then they will find no opposition. Far from it. We have had to haul RR kicking and screaming onto the National Committee; he will hardly want to move to London to become part of the 'machine' (and even the DCF will hardly propose that the centre be moved to Bolton, or be run by remote control from Bolton...) If RR does want to move, then we will immediately make room for him. He will be on the SC, part of the 'centre', etc. Is that not enough? Then we will make him group president for life - would that not fit the bill? It would not. RR, by his attitude to the NC, let alone the SC, has made it obvious he finds it uncomfortable and ego-bruising to be part of a collective where he only has the power of one vote and what persuasion he can muster. He retired from that situation to build a house, presumably a house solid enough to stand despite the economic catastrophe he predicted. He refused NC membership in 1974.

Seriously: positions of life president aside, if RR is willing to work full time for the group, it could probably be arranged. Certainly we will give and have given him every right to argue for his ideas. But that is not enough for RR: he wants power of veto over the group. Exaggeration? No! Someone who refuses to relate to his 'peers' on the NC but instead retreats and gathers a collection of raw comrades round him when he loses an argument is - for now anyway - incapable of collective work.

Every single member of the SC, probably - every single one of the 'villains' who, on the DCF's reckoning, manipulate and browbeat the group - has on one occasion or another been in a minority of one. That sort of thing can be very vexatious. It is however unavoidable in any democratic organisation of critically-minded people. But RR won't take it. RR doesn't know it, but logically he is bent on creating a cult where no-one contradicts him and sends him off to sulk.

We conclude, therefore: we haven't got a tendency, we haven't got a faction, we have the Ratcliffe clique and friends. They don't know what they want. They feel grouses and grumbles.

A grouping without perspectives, politics, prospects, or even consciously worked out goals. We have a clique decked out as a serious political formation. No-one should be fooled.

THE 'POLITICS' OF UNPRINCIPLED
COMBINATIONISM

"I attempted to express my objections in letters to several comrades, but I have been convinced that fundamentals which appeared to me elementary for a proletarian revolutionist have found no echo among some of the leaders of the Opposition, who have developed a definite conservative psychology. It can be characterised in the following manner: extreme, often sickly sensitivity in relation to everything that concerns their own circle, and the greatest indifference in relation to everything that concerns the rest of the world."
(Trotsky: Writings '30/31, p.152-3)

Trotsky was writing about the leaders of the German Left Opposition. When it came to signing a resolution about China or America, they didn't really mind much what it said; when it came to something that affected their own little cabbage-patch, they were up in arms.

The platform of the 'Democratic Centralist Faction' is the same sort of thing, reproduced on a tiny, ridiculous scale. On a policy for Workers Fight, they have nothing to say. On the terrible injustices Bolton WF have suffered at the hands of the tyrannical 'centre', they can write page after page (though even on that, always without documentation, details, specific charges).

Throughout the entire document, there is not one clearly stated political position. Complaints, evasions, hints, lawyers' phrases... those there are by the truckload.

Let us look at what the DCF platform has to say on a number of important political questions.

NO PLATFORM FOR FASCISTS

On page 29 we find a section that lectures us on thoughtless sloganising. After a heavy sermon telling us that an article in Young Socialist no. 2 was not very well written, we arrive at the meat of this section, on "No Platform for Fascists". This relates to an incident where ND (now a DCF member) chairing an anti-fascist meeting, attempted to give the floor to the local National Front Parliamentary candidate. It attacks the National Committee for failing to sufficiently analyse the situation in that particular meeting, and instead condemning ND's action on the basis of the general position of "No Platform for Fascists".

The DCF platform omits to mention a number of points.

It omits to mention that at the National Committee meeting John Bloxam did argue a case for why specifically at that meeting the general principle of "No Platform for Fascists" should apply. If we are greatly outnumbered by the National Front, or if we are in a situation where the great majority of people round us are firmly opposed to physically stopping the National Front, then it is probably foolhardy to try to go into immediate violent action. We will advance the general line of "No Platform for Fascists" better by peaceful propaganda in that situation, and hopefully enable ourselves to physically enforce "No Platform for Fascists" later. However, if we are in control of the situation - as, for example, if we are chairing an anti-fascist meeting, - we should never give a platform to fascists. At worst that will give the fascists a chance to rally their forces; at best it will strengthen liberal 'let them have their say' prejudices in the anti-fascist audience.

It omits to mention that Roy Ratcliffe was present at the National Committee and was well placed to give a better analysis of that meeting if he thought John's not good enough.

It omits to mention that the item of the National Committee's agenda was disciplinary action against ND, not a discussion (which in its right place might be

useful, of course) on the implementation of "No Platform for Fascists".

Most scandalously, it omits to mention that RR, the chief author of the DCF platform, voted to censure ND for letting the fascist speak.

Thus ND and RR agree to ignore the main political question - was it right, or was it wrong, to give the fascist the floor - and to come together to factionalise against WF on the grounds that they didn't like the way the National Committee discussed the incident! The political question is shoved safely out of sight, and the gripes and grievances occupy centre stage, well docked out, of course, with pompous lectures on method and quotations from Lenin.

When it comes to free speech for fascists, RR has his principles, but for RR, as for Abern (another label! Sorry, Roy! Apologies also to the ghost of poor Martin Abern) a good combination is worth more than a principle, any day. Speaking of political riff-raff like D N Pritt MP, a defender of the Moscow Trials in the 1930s, Trotsky expressed his contempt to a whole political species with a vivid phrase - "lawyers with supple spines". RR is a lawyer whose spine is getting more subtle with each new demand placed on it by the needs of maintaining the clique and the alliance. Was ND right or wrong? Outrageously wrong (and extremely bureaucratic to boot; he did not consult the meeting, and in fact the fascist was eventually prevented from speaking by the audience, outraged at ND's action). But the question is glossed over with an apparently reasonable case that there are exceptions....

THE LABOUR PARTY

It is a matter of factual record that RR, in opposing the LP entry tactic in 1973, argued as follows:

"The working class did have illusions in the LP, but these had been largely overcome. The problem was one of no alternative - we should be building that alternative rather than recruiting to the LP"
(Extended NC minutes, 19-8-73; see IB 15)

It is a matter of fact that ND's position has been to oppose putting demands on the Labour leadership (see letter from ND in WF 46).

It is a matter of fact that RR, speaking at the 1974 WF conference, said:

"Anti-fascist work should take priority over LP work"
(Minutes, p.8)

Perhaps he was thinking first and foremost of Bolton; but the remark was general.

The DCF platform (p.17) says:

"In relation to the Labour Party, we direct those demands** to the leadership through agitation within the rank and file, independently of the Labour Party itself, in a systematic manner determined by a definite programme and perspective..."

If that means anything, it means we should stay well out of the Labour Party. Yet, later, on page 40, the DCF cite "two reasons that remain valid for entry work" and say we should do entry work in some local circumstances.

The DCF platform has no definite political position on the Labour Party. Does the DCF agree with RR's 1973 position? It may be somewhat embarrassing for them to say, just at the time when a wave of militant occupations is taking place, with their demands centred round calls on Benn to do something - not quite the situation of illusions in the Labour Party having disappeared! Does the DCF agree with ND's letter in WF 46? Does it agree with RR's remarks at the 1974 Conference? It would be good to have a definite political statement.

** Which demands, you may well ask. So would we ask. The only help the DCF platform gives us is to say they should be "transitional demands". Does this mean every transitional demand should be directed to the Labour leadership? Or that demands other than transitional demands (e.g. democratic demands) shouldn't be? Generally, trying to make sense of that section of the DCF document is a thankless effort.

Instead, we do not even have a tactical plan for the group. The DCF just say "Entrism to be a matter of local conditions. To be carried on where thought to be of value in developing a cadre." (p.43)

I.e. do your own thing, and let us do our own thing in Bolton. I.e. abandoning any attempt to plan the activity of the group on a national scale; abandoning any central political direction of our work; abandoning Leninism in favour of federalism.

Thus the DCF can appeal for themselves in Bolton to be exempt from LP work, can hope to gain support from any comrade unhappy with LP work, and at the same time need not state any clear position which might cut them off from comrades who appreciate the value of Labour Party work but could be drawn towards the DCF by other grouses against the group. That's fine for a rotten combination. You couldn't run a national organisation that way. It means that if the DCF continues its trajectory out of WF it has no common future. It will pay for its lack of principle as the IS Left Opposition did.

'GENERAL STRIKE TO KICK THE TORIES OUT'

In WF 39 John Strauther wrote a letter, under the name of A. Ryan, recommending a policy of "general strike to kick out the Tories and replace them by a Labour government...". He later argued for a similar policy in the Internal Bulletin (IBs 19 and 20; reply in no.21), and in his letter to the National Secretary of 30.10.74 (IB no.25) he endorsed those IB articles, saying that they "set out (his) political criticisms of the WF line".

John Strauther is one of the most prominent members of the DCF.

But if the policy of RR (1973 version) and ND (WF 46) differs from the policy of Workers Fight in an "ultra-left" direction, seeking as it does to ignore or bypass the Labour Party as a factor in the class struggle, JS's position clearly differs from WF policy in exactly the opposite direction, a rightist direction. JS's position says that the greatest industrial self-mobilisation of the working class, a self-mobilisation immediately posing the question of workers' control and workers' councils, should define itself in terms of changing bourgeois governments.

Obviously the question of the slogan "General Strike to kick the Tories out" as such is not topical today. But it may possibly be topical soon. And in any case the debate over that slogan has major implications for our attitude to the state and to the Labour Party.

What is the position of the DCF on that debate? The platform does not say. It evades the question, the better to unite people with varied political positions on the basis of common complaints and grievances. What will this mean if - when - they go out of WF? JS is almost in the arms of the IMG already. Comrades Ratcliffe, Duffield, Heyes, Stewart, Shallice - do you want to follow him?

HOUSEWORK AND THE FAMILY

The DCF's attitude on the oppression of women deserves closer study, and has received it in another section of this document. Here, however, we shall show how the DCF's arguments in their platform systematically avoid stating their position clearly.

On page 32 WF is condemned for the way we use the demand for socialisation of housework.

"It is an aim for the future",

we are told:

"but in no way is it a demand that is at all relevant to the here and now".

Why?

"It is unimaginable that such a service could be established under capitalism. And even after a revolution it would be a long job". (p 33)

If we just used 'socialisation of housework' as a cure-all, counterposing it to the struggle here and now, that would indeed be wrong. But clearly we don't do that - we are involved in campaigns for the Working Women's Charter, campaigns for nurseries, campaigns for abortion on demand, etc. On the other hand, if we counterpose the struggle here and now to our general socialist demands - as the DCF does - that is reformism. Socialist demands or goals? "An aim for the future, but in no way a demand relevant to the here and now". This is precisely the position of the Second International. From day to day we pursue the struggle for reforms - and socialism is a long-term aim, of no clear relevance to today's struggle. It is a million miles from a Trotskyist approach, striving always to bring forward the general class, socialist aims in the day-to-day struggle.

The DCF justify their position with some quotations from Trotsky writing about post-revolutionary Russia. These quotations, however, like the quotations from the same source in RR's piece on 'Wages for Housework', are completely out of context. Trotsky was writing about a society where the most elementary level of bourgeois technique and culture had yet to be reached. We are living in one of the most developed capitalist societies. Even in relation to Russia, Trotsky declared that the emancipation of women -

"can be accomplished only through the organisation of communal methods of feeding and child rearing"

(a passage quoted by the DCF themselves on page 33). We are doubly justified in making the same declaration in Britain, where the high level of technique and culture could make the socialisation of housework a relatively speedy process. To quote Trotsky's statements about Russia to the British working class is effectively to say to the British working class "you must re-trace the long decades of growth in technique and culture which capitalism has accomplished". It is raving nonsense. The DCF quote from Trotsky like Talmudists, taking passages relating to a backward society, applying them mechanically to a very advanced society, and producing minimalist, petty-reformist conclusions. It's almost like the WRP, who are always saying the 'crisis' is making minimal demands unrealisable under capitalism, and using that as a justification for confining themselves to minimalism.

THE "STRUGGLE GOING ON AT GROUND LEVEL"

There is an additional twist to the reformism of the DCF's line. Not only do they counterpose the struggle for reforms here and now to revolutionary aims; their conception of the struggle for reforms here and now needs to be examined. On page 34, the DCF say:

"... we cop out of the struggle going on at ground level; the sort of struggle the Bolton Womens Liberation Group undertook recently when they published a detailed two-page leaflet on what they saw as male chauvinist attitudes among left-group members on the Bolton Anti-Fascist Committee".

So that leaflet represents a good example of the "struggle going on at ground level" which we should concentrate on; not the fight round the Working Womens Charter, not the fight for equality for women in the trade unions, not the fight for abortion on demand, but the sort of struggle represented by that leaflet.

What was the main aim of that leaflet? To defend Neil Duffield's assault on Tom Handley of the RMC, justifying it on the grounds that it is right to hit male chauvinists. Now even Neil Duffield himself has finally come round to admitting that the assault on Tom Handley was wrong. It would follow, presumably, that the leaflet is wrong too. But the DCF do not even bother to mention the content of the leaflet. The WF Steering Committee didn't like it... so it must be good! Never mind about the politics of the leaflet; what matters is whether someone dared to cross Eileen Murphy...

there is more to say. Suppose the attack on male chauvinist attitudes in the leaflet was quite correct. Still what we have is not even a struggle for social reform, but a struggle to reform the personal behaviour of certain individuals. Yes indeed, there should be a struggle to reform personal behaviour. But if that struggle to reform personal behaviour becomes primary, rather than the fight for social reforms, let alone for revolutionary changes in the general conditions of society - then by what token do we call ourselves revolutionaries or socialists or even political people at all, rather than social workers with a tinge of leftist phrasemongering?

None of this is stated clearly, of course. Hints, implications, generalised complaints against WF without specific documentation... The DCF do not at any point suggest any new policy for WF on the question of women, any new demands we should adopt, any of our present demands we should drop. Yet the logic of their arguments is to adopt a completely reformist position on the question of women's oppression. They simply never take any argument to its logical conclusions.

The members of the DCF say they do oppose the Wages for Housework demand. If so, what arguments can they possibly use against it? In the section on RR's article on housework, we show that he says, effectively, that housework will continue under socialism, and the idea of it being trivial and petty is merely a reflection of bourgeois attitudes. If so, what possible objection can there be to 'wages for housework'?

And one more point: the CP until recently, and also IS at times, have argued that under capitalism the family is a source of strength to the working class, being a place to receive love and comfort and mutual support. From their point of view, what possible objection can the DCF have to this reformist attitude?

THE INTERNATIONAL MARXIST GROUP

On page 36 the DCF condemn the view that "Either WF is the serious organisation and the IMG a monstrous blind alley and waste of valuable resources, or vice versa". On page 27, the DCF attack our description of the IMG as having a "Kaleidoscopic variety of theoretical breakthroughs, usually wrong and often bizarre". This, they say, is "non-political abuse".

What the DCF don't say is whether they agree that the IMG is a monstrous blind alley, or whether they think it is a serious political organisation. The IMG and WF have differed sharply on almost every major question over recent years. If WF is anywhere near having reasonably correct politics, then the IMG must be wrong. If the IMG is somewhere near the right line, then WF must be way off beam.

Believing that WF's politics have generally been along the right lines, we have no option but to say that the IMG is a massive waste of the effort of hundreds of potentially valuable revolutionaries. That the IMG may be right on this or that individual issue - that it may even be right occasionally where WF is wrong - changes that conclusion not one bit.

If the DCF believe otherwise, they should say just where they think the IMG's politics are better than WF's. Instead they just produce general, evasive formulas, suitable for covering over the differences between John Strauther (who is in substantial political agreement with 'Tendency A' of the IMG, including on the cardinal question of 'General Strike to kick the Tories Out') and the other DCF comrades (who have never shown any sympathy for IMG).

REGROUPMENT

Page 3: "We welcome the proposed regroupment as a chance for the renewal of Marxist method and politics".

Page 27: the DCF argue that WF should have offered an account of internal disagreements and DCF allegations in debate over regroupment.

Page 27: the DCF dismisses our criticisms of other tendencies as "non-political abuse".

Page 28: the DCF attack "'serious regroupment' which really means 'Build Workers Fight'".

The idea that we should go hawking the DCF's whinings and complaints around the left in the interests of "'serious' debate" says a great deal about the DCF's idea of democratic centralism, and equally as much about their idea of serious political debate. If the RMC, for example, does fuse with WF, and the debate with the DCF is still going on, then the DCF have every right to accost the ex-RMC comrades with their grievances. Until then, as long as WF is a separate organisation, the DCF should keep their grievances within the organisation, and the debate towards regroupment will be concerned with the major issues of the class struggle, not with Roy Ratcliffe's or Neil Duffield's outcries against fancied persecution.

The complaint about "non-political abuse" would simply seem to be an objection to the normal use of the English language, if it were not for RR's repeated talk of "the crisis of Marxism".

"Marxism since Trotsky's death has become transformed into half-learned dogmas and one-sided mutilated slogans" (p.1)

What the DCF is evidently saying is that they are opposed to fighting aggressively for the line of Workers Fight, vigorously attacking the policies of other tendencies, and entering regroupment, like any other activity, as militant fighters for the politics of WF. We, for our part, are not at all ashamed to say that we are entering regroupment with a view to building WF. We are not closed to ideas from other tendencies; but we do not stand around with our heads empty, waiting for some other tendency to supply us with ideas - we enter every debate as militant advocates of our own ideas.

THE THREAT OF FASCISM

The repeated theme of the DCF's section on the British economy is the plight of small capitalists:

"The small business-men, shop-keepers, self-employed etc. will increasingly look for a strong arm to represent their interests as they are incapable of representing their own, except through the medium of either the working class or the ruling class. They will be drawn irresistibly towards National Front formations if they are not won to the working class" (page 13)

On page 14, that section concludes by describing the major threats as follows:

".. the political attacks of the ruling class whether directed through the State machinery or the organised thuggery of fascist-type organisations".

Further, on page 26, we are told:

"The same 'simmering crisis' we talk of, offers fascism its 'big chance', and which of us it is who manages to hit the jackpot (!) depends on who wins the ideological battle".

If these statements have any meaning at all, it must be as follows: in the crisis, fascist and revolutionary-socialist forces are growing in parallel; the fascists recruit chiefly from small businessmen (see also page 11); we should fight the fascists (a) by "representing the interests" of small capitalists; (b) by carrying on an 'ideological battle' against fascism.

A few things need to be said about these ideas.

Point 1: The recruiting base of fascism is not only small businessmen, but also, and more importantly, white collar sections, unemployed workers, and students - and, probably most important at the present incubation stage of fascism, the lumpenproletariat. Indeed, if the most important recruiting basis of fascism were small businessmen, we could comfortably forget about any fascist threat in Britain, since the small businessman class is smaller in Britain than, probably, in any other country.

Point 2: To 'represent the interests' of small businessmen would be simply reactionary. Who are these small businessmen? The sweat-shop owners; the shopkeepers who exploit grossly underpaid casual and child labour; the petty crooks. Anti-trade union almost to a man, and for very good reasons. Our task is to 'represent the interests' of the working class, not of the most backward sections of the capitalist class. We can attempt to convince individual members of the petty capitalist class to throw in their lot with socialism, pointing out to them that capitalism offers a bleak future; but that is quite a different matter, and certainly no sort of priority for a small grouping still engaged in gaining a foothold in the working class itself.

Point 3: Only weak-kneed liberals could attempt to fight fascism by an 'ideological battle' (such a contrast with how to fight male chauvinism!) Actually, even though the DCF's platform statement seems to fit in with Neil Duffield's practice in the Bolton Anti-Fascist meeting where he tried to give the NF member the floor, the DCF probably don't mean what they say. What we have is another example of how they have picked up Marxist phrases without understanding them.

In some Marxist text or other they have read about the 'ideological struggle' and how it is, in the last analysis, crucial to revolutionary victory or defeat. What the Marxist text meant, of course, was the ideological battle in the working class movement, between revolutionary Marxism and the various reformist trends, and among the nominally revolutionary Marxist tendencies. That battle, however, as we've seen, just doesn't figure in the DCF's view of the world, or rather they see themselves as hors de la melee, impartially denouncing all 'left groups' (including the one they are nominally members of) for failing to attain the heights of "the correct Marxist perspective" and complete assimilation of the ideas of women's liberation.

Thus the DCF stick the phrase "ideological battle" into their platform without understanding what it means, and end up with the nonsense statement that the future depends on an ideological battle between Marxism and fascism.

Point 4: Most seriously - because here we seem to have an opinion genuinely held by the DCF, or at least by RR, rather than just another case of political illiteracy - the idea of fascism and revolutionary socialism growing in parallel is quite wrong. Bas Hardy outlines the Marxist conception in his review of Guerin's book "Fascism and Big Business" (WF 59):

"Guerin rejects as 'oversimplified' the view held by some revolutionaries 'that the bourgeoisie resorts to fascism only to smash the imminent threat of the proletarian revolution'. In fact the fascist wave swept over Europe at a time when the wave of socialist revolution was subsiding. In Italy and Germany after the first World War, factories were occupied and soviets established, but this challenge to the rule of capital proved fruitless owing to the cowardice and treachery of the leaders of the labour movement. It was only after the working class failed to seize political power that the fascists launched their attempt to do so".

Certainly it is necessary for revolutionaries to fight the fascists now, in their incubation phase. Even though they pose absolutely no serious threat in terms of taking power, they can do effective work in terrorising individual leftists or black workers, and they can build a nucleus for the future - if we don't stop them. But we have to remember that the fascists are not at present the force the capitalist class are using to deal their blows against the working class. Instead, overwhelmingly, it is through the reformist bureaucracies that the capitalists are directing their attacks.

To see fascism as the main immediate threat would severely disorientate us. Our main orientation would be to get unity with the reformists for the fight against fascism - rather than waging a vigorous fight against the capitalist attacks directed through the agency of the reformists.**

** The above was written a few weeks ago. Now when it is stencilled we have the practical example of the vitriolic attack by ND on our critical assessment of the anti-fascist activity of the reformist domagogue Paul Rose (see WF 90; but the original unedited text of ND's letter was much longer and much more vitriolic)

THE ACTION PROGRAMME

On page 18 the DCF says what little it has to say on the question of political programme. We need, so we are told, two programmes: "the full transitional programme for the expropriation of the capitalist class and the establishment of a planned economy"; and also "an action programme of transitional demands for the coming period". The full transitional programme is for "propaganda"; the 'action programme' for 'agitation and organisation' and to 'meet the present needs of the working class'.

In other words, we have a revolutionary programme for general propaganda, and a programme of reforms for the here and now. Or, as the Second International used to put it, a maximum programme and a minimum programme. Sometime in the future we will be revolutionaries; for now we are just militant reformists.

And not very good militant reformists, either. The most important point about the DCF's "action programme" is what it leaves out - i.e. almost every controversial political question of the present period!

It contains no policy on the Common Market. John Strauther of the DCF has stated publicly in the Liverpool WF branch that he supports the chauvinist position of campaigning for withdrawal from the EEG. What is the position of the DCF?

It contains no mention of self-determination for Ireland or solidarity with the Republicans and socialists fighting British Imperialism.

It contains no indication of what attitude we should adopt to 'Bennism'.

It contains no mention of workers' inquiries and no mention of workers' control except as something to be granted (by the bourgeois state, presumably) along with the nationalisation of bankrupt companies.

It omits the position of 'No Platform for Fascists'.

It contains no mention of the question of picketing and workers' self-defence.

It contains no mention of the immigration laws or black caucuses or women's caucuses in the unions.

It contains no mention of the demand for a shorter working week.

It contains no mention of... but one could go through almost every important political issue of the day.

In short, the political programme of the DCF, such as it is, is a hollow shell of general platitudes. In terms of political programme, the DCF have nothing to say. All they do have to say is how badly they have been treated.

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BOLTON AND WORKERS' FIGHT -THE PRE-HISTORY OF THE DCF

The Bolton WF branch was founded when we were expelled from IS at the end of 1971, with three members from Bolton IS - Howard Sweeney, Paul Greenhalgh, and Andrew Hornung - and Roy Ratcliffe, who had previously been out of active politics since his membership of the SLL in the mid '60s. PG soon dropped out, and AH moved to London, but three new members were recruited: John Cunningham, Chris Corcoran, and Norma Dunster.

We simply carried over the geographical divisions existing in IS at the time of our expulsion, without seriously asking whether a group so thinly spread in the whole area could or should have a Manchester and Bolton branch. The Bolton IS branch itself had only recently begun to have any real existence.

In fact, though, the formal designation at that time was North West (i.e. ^{Stoke}Manchester/Bolton, there being no branch in Liverpool) branch, with Manchester and Bolton cells. Our original idea of regional branches soon became manifestly fictitious, but there was a point behind it: the need for cooperation, mutual assistance, regular joint meetings, etc., given the weakness of each local group. That, we repeat, was our original idea, not a novel notion cooked up later for the sake of persecuting RR.

RR was soon recognised as being a talented comrade. He was elected to the National Committee and asked to be regional organiser for the north west. However, the question of 'parochialism' in Bolton was raised as early as June 1972.

In 1972, Bolton WF was most heavily involved in the struggle against the Housing Finance Act, and had quite a leading position in the tenants' movement in Bolton. Out of this leading position very little was built in terms of solid cadre development. To say that is not to condemn anyone in Bolton: that was the nature of the tenants' struggle, that it flared up quickly, but it was very difficult to build anything solid out of it, specially so for a group our size.

What was wrong was that illusions developed on the possibility of building a revolutionary organisation rapidly and directly from mass struggles, by-passing the other established organisations of the left, including the Labour Party. An incident where a mass meeting chose a WF speaker in preference to a Labour Party speaker was bandied about the group, implicitly as an indication of our strength and the LP's decline - with an accompanying loss of perspective of proportion on the question of the Labour Party.

The whole of Workers Fight was tinged with ultra-leftism, but we never gave in to this illusion of by-passing the established left, which was particularly strong in Bolton because of the weakness of the established left there, the heady experience of leading the tenants' movement - and because of the sectarian SLL miseducation of RR.

RR's period of association with the SLL seems to have covered the time of its crossing the line into insane organisational sectarianism. The SLL withdrew from the Labour Party (after 17 years in it!) just after it had reached office, and when support for Wilson was still actually mounting; it called for the bringing down of the Wilson government immediately after its election, and proclaimed "Social democracy is breaking up". By 1967 the SLL was telling tens of thousands of miners faced with redundancies that the solution was for them all to join the SLL. (RR seems to have dropped out by then).

Given his political background, it is doubtful if RR ever had any understanding of the history of the subject of reformism. Here the Steering Committee deserves severe criticism for not engaging in an educational drive in relation to reformism. But the urgency of the matter escaped us, and, frankly, with the partial exception of AH, none of us really knew RR politically. The RR problem has unfolded itself in layers and, for example, it was as late as last September that one of us (SM) grasped the fact that RR doesn't understand the Leninist

theory of the party (See section on Cadre-Building)

While the organisation as a whole never had illusions that the Labour Party would simply melt away - even the document of that section of WF which opposed a blanket Labour vote in 1970 and advocated instead voting for anti-'In Place of Strife' MPs loyal to the TUs, explicitly said that we would most likely wind up having to use the entry tactic again - there undoubtedly was confusion. The confusion was created (a) by the general current of ultra leftism, and (b) by our conscious decision to "emulate" IS, to refuse to allow ourselves to be beaten back from attempting the mass work we had been doing. We hoped that we could quickly win over large numbers of people in IS who had general political sympathy with us if we could demonstrate our viability with the paper, etc. That was an illusion, but we could not know that until after we had made the attempt. (C) There was the tremendous direct action of the class in early 1972, seeming to smash through all the established barriers.

By mid 1972, we had started to try to face the problem of cadre development. The article on 'Fusion of Education and Organisation' (August 1972) sums up the general formula we arrived at on how to integrate our agitational mass work with our propaganda tasks.

September 1972 NC minutes.

"SM: ... we must combine mass work with cadre development.

RR: It is not only in propaganda that we can get across advanced ideas; he had been able to put across quite advanced ideas in his tenants' agitation.

AH: Advanced agitation is not the same as revolutionary cadre development. Our problem is to link agitation and cadre development... The danger is that we will operate on a 'service', 'credibility' level in the tenants' movement."

The roles here are not quite as RR's version of our problems and their history depicts them. Far from it - it gradually became obvious to those who faced the problems of cadre development that Bolton and RR specifically were a problem.**

"THE LOCAL WORK HAS MADE YOU LOSE SIGHT..."

It was at this period that the question of 'parochialism' in Bolton was first discussed in Workers Fight.

In June 1972 John Cunningham wrote to the Editorial Board criticising the publication in Workers Fight of a letter of resignation from IS from two comrades who had just joined WF. Andrew Hornung wrote in reply, and AH's letter was reproduced in Internal Bulletin no.5 (September 1972). AH argued "just as the local work has made you lose sight of the general considerations, it has made you overlook a number of obvious and quite incontestable points" in relation to the need for WF to relate to other tendencies of the left, including IS. JC was over-generalising from the Bolton situation. In Bolton IS had no strength, but he ignored the fact that almost everywhere else we could recruit workers only if they had first come across IS and rejected IS's politics. The smaller you are in a galaxy of left groups with a great deal in common, the more the route to you is over the larger groups. Obviously 'fresh' comrades will be recruited; here the process of education about the other groups takes on an internal, didactic form. But it is indispensable if a raw comrade is to be consolidated for WF, educated in WF politics, and turned into a cadre able to fight the centrist tendencies.

JC replies (4.7.72):

"I think you hit the nail on the head when you spoke of localism and

** On RR's apparent about-turn towards 'cadre-building', see below.

political shortsightedness, unfortunately this is something we are guilty of in Bolton... since the aggregate we have tended to 'sit back on our laurels' as it were, and look at the political situation in Bolton without considering the national situation".

In Internal Bulletin no.5 there also appears an article from Bolton WF. It attacks the WF centre sharply on account of a number of organisational failings.

"If the present intolerable state of affairs continues WF will for all intents and purposes cease to function as a revolutionary organisation.

"There seems to be an almost ironically comic error in branch circular 019 - 'as a stop gap a weekend school concentrating on organisation and methods of political work will be held on the weekend of the 27th' - is ANYONE at the centre capable of commenting on organisation.

"What the comrades at the centre don't appear to realise is that there is a real world outside of their ivory towers.....

"The centre at times shows a lack of understanding of the interconnections between theory and practice, theory should be a guide to practice and not JUST an interpretation of the world - at the moment there is a polarisation between theory and practice, the two must be brought together more. As Marx put it, the object is not merely to interpret the world but to change it."

The article goes on to detail the complaints: a cadre school had been subject to cancellations and late starting (in the week when it was originally scheduled, there were the mass strikes over the Pentonville 5, and there were problems re-scheduling it); NC meeting dates had also been changed; the paper was irregular; we only had one trained printer; the tenants' supplement was delayed.

"Let us introduce a militant worker to all this confusion, how do we explain all this anarchy to him? Militant workers (9 times out of 10 in a trade union) see the need for organisation; we tell them this in the paper and in speaking to them. We explain theoretically the need for organisation, but what do we show them in practice? Ask yourselves, comrades, and don't come up with feeble excuses, there are always excuses. IS YOUR THEORY GUIDING YOUR PRACTICE? We would maintain that it is NOT!

"There is a superficial adherence to Marxism, but it can be seen that the development of the understanding of Marxism by centre comrades is one sided. For too long theory has gone on in isolation without adequate relation to practice, if this continues the theory merely becomes sterile propaganda. The need at this stage is not for centre comrades to understand more theory but to understand to relate the existing theory to practice correctly...." **

This pompous tub-thumping reminds one more of Maoism - every failing is a result of insufficient understanding of the little red book - than of Marxism. We couldn't actually be overworked and make a few slips (small enough, taken in proportion) - no, we lived in an ivory tower and had only a superficial adherence to Marxism.

This abusive tirade - notice, the "nasty words", to use the DCF's expression, came first from Bolton - was directed at people who had in the previous six months achieved a very great deal on very puny resources; conducted a six-week factional campaign which doubled our membership before expulsion; organised and set up a group printing plant; functioned as 'voluntary slave labour' learning

** Comrades may like to compare this line of argument - 'no need to understand more theory' - with RR's present support (DCF platform page 1) for Bruno Bauer's idea that "theory is the strongest practice". Marx and Engels scornfully remark of Bauer:

"Saint Bruno even goes so far as to assert that only 'criticism and critics make history'" ('The German Ideology', Easton & Guddat p. 434).

to produce a paper - and also carried out all the political functions of the leading committee.

It came from a group of people with no experience plus someone who had been back in political activity less than a year, was high on delusions of an easy ride politically and was soon to collapse into semi-activity out of which he has only recently re-emerged!

There can be no better proof that in politics turning the other cheek doesn't work. We responded diplomatically, even docilely, admitting our faults, etc - in other words those on the SC counselling conciliation won the day. Why? Because we wanted to avoid the vice of subjectivism and the politics of self-justification and 'infatuation with our own inadequacies', in Lenin's phrase.

AH wrote to RR as follows, (also taking up specific points of complaint:)

"The group - tiny as it is - is riddled with localism and exceptionalism. It is probably no secret to you that the letter that appears in the Internal Bulletin over my name was addressed to John Cunningham. Now John was very quick in admitting he was in the wrong.... But I suspect there is an element of localism in Bolton still. What does this canker feed on? Errors and Ineptitude at the centre! It turns swiftly to anti-political anti-theoretical stances. The degree to which these stances are justified with political language is quite beside the point.

"The reason why I think this attitude persists in Bolton is because of your (that is the branch's) latest letter. Let me say at the outset that some of the complaints were certainly justified. No doubt. BUT the ivory tower accusations with which the letter spikes its points is nonsense. An honest look at our paper compared with those of other political tendencies reveals one thing... a look at our approach to the Dockers' jailing reveals one thing... If there's any tower we live in it is the tower from which you can see the wood for the trees..."

Around the same time Chris Corcoran wrote an article for the Internal Bulletin which was published in IB no.8. CC argued that WF was wrong in giving too much attention to propaganda work, particularly work directed towards the established left, and not enough to mass work. MT replied, also in IB no.'8:

"...we're not a mass party. If we hope to build primarily through agitational work, then CP or IS or the SLL - the 'viable' groups - will beat us every time.

"One solution is 'base-building'. That is, we concentrate not on the 'masses' at large, but specific limited areas - this housing estate, that factory, etc. This approach has some validity, but taken as a universal solution it leads to economism and what we have called 'localism'..."

"We will attract workers to WF, rather than the 'viable' groups, only on the strength of our (complex) ideas - i.e. on the basis of study, not through a 'lick it and see' method..."

The question of parochialism, then, was not some slander invented to throw dirt on RR when he developed political differences with the WF majority, but a question which had been raised - in a comradely and friendly way - by the Steering Committee as far back as mid-1972. Throughout this whole period it is the SC which is concerned for cadre-building, propaganda work, education. It is RR and those under his leadership who represent a shallow activism and who counterpose this pseudo-mass work to attempts by the majority of the present SC to attend to the problems of cadre building. This period covers almost all RR's active life in WF.

Thereafter there was the essay into economic analysis and the collapse into partial or complete inactivity. His illusions soured, RR now implicitly advocates an attitude in terms of activity level and approach that has more in common with the completely Liquidationist Tearsite majority of the old IS Right Opposition than anything else.

The apparent about-turn to the stress on "cadre building" in the DCF platform is in fact only skin deep. As we have noted (section on 'Cadre Building') the DCF's approach to 'cadre building' is completely inward-looking. For a serious revolutionary organisation, cadre building is a matter of completely winning comrades away from the influences of Stalinism, reformism, and the centrist groupings, and training them to fight those other tendencies on the left. And for us, as for Trotsky, "the fundamental Bolshevik prejudice consists precisely in the idea that one can only learn to ride when one is sitting firmly on a horse". For the DCF, apparently, cadre building proceeds in a vacuum. For example, we shouldn't train comrades in fighting reformism through activity in the LPYS... no, we should keep them out of that fight against reformism in order to train them. Most important, apparently, is training comrades in the problems such as looking after children, the internal, personal problems of the group - no, not even of the group, of the individuals in the group.

That sort of 'cadre building' is what the 1972 idea of building a revolutionary organisation direct from the mass movement turns into when the tide of the mass movement ebbs, or flows into channels less directly accessible (such as the industrial struggle, accessible to IH but not to RR, and in any case rarely offering brilliant ascents to mass influence of the sort experienced in the tenants movement).

Comrades should keep the record in mind when RR etc. talk of their most recent political differences generating the centre's attitude to them. No. They had, implicitly, the inversion of their current coterie-politics when the conflict began. Nor was it a matter of exchanges confined to letters and minutes. Bolton by and large did its own thing, as we shall see later.

MASS WORK, UNITED FRONTS, AND THE LENINIST ORGANISATION

The problems raised in 1972 - can a small revolutionary organisation build itself directly and predominantly from mass work, or does it also have to relate to the established tendencies on the left (reformism, Stalinism, the centrist groups)? - this problem in fact runs right through the history of Bolton and Workers Fight. Later we had Bolton WF concentrating its efforts in a Council of Action which grew out of the tenants struggle, and afterwards in the Anti-Fascist Committee which has grown out of that Council of Action. These Councils and Committees have in fact been more a sort of "Bolton revolutionary front" than normal United Front bodies. And that "Bolton revolutionary front" has been more central to the Bolton comrades' orientation than the national priorities of Workers Fight.

That fact, perhaps, explains something about the Bolton comrades' hostility to fusion with Manchester, and to work in the Labour Party Young Socialists. Actually it is central. The history of work in Bolton, actually the history both of RR & Bolton WF and of Neil Duffield before & after joining WF, is a history of a vain seeking after mass influence through the successive committees. Each committee has mushroomed and then collapsed, without anything solid being built in terms of WF recruitment or cadre development.

A discussion of the lessons of this experience was held between NW, ND^{EM} and SM before ND^{EM} joined WF. ND couldn't understand how the Council of Action, at one time able to hold large meetings, rapidly became a bearpit and declined. He could not understand the difference between a Leninist organisation, held together by a comprehensive programme and doctrine, and therefore retaining the ability to work through periods of downturn, and a united front, organised round specific actions over specific issues, and therefore inevitably short-lived.

For ND, WF is just another field of activity, on the same level as the various united fronts, in which he participates as an individual socialist. The united fronts are as important as WF - indeed, perhaps more important because having greater immediate mass contact. He readily participates in the Manchester 'Democratic Defence' anti-fascist group. Manchester/Bolton coordination of anti-fascist work is fine - but a joint Manchester/Bolton WF branch of 15 people is unworkable.

RR formally is on a higher level. He has the abstract phrases of the Leninist theory of the party. But his actual knowledge is small (he has never read such a basic text as "The Struggle for a Proletarian Party", for example) and his abstract phrases were learnt in

the school of the SLL - a school that taught him that the organisation with "the correct Marxist perspective" would immediately rally the masses to its banner. Now, with the souring of his illusions about superficial mass influence leading to large scale easy recruitment, with his pride bruised, with increasing demoralisation, he has sunk to the same woolly level as ND, unable to distinguish between united front committees and a Leninist organisation, and in practice abandoning any fight for the specific ideas of our organisation in the broader "revolutionary" milieu. It is that which links ND and RR politically.

AFTER THE TENANTS' MOVEMENT

By the beginning of 1973, the tenants' movement had declined, and in the first half of 1973 Bolton suffered a downturn. Influence, sympathy, credibility was not crystallised in the form of recruitment. Comrades miseducated in hopes of rapid, easy gains collapsed when the bubble burst.

CC left WF and HS and ND were suspended from membership by the branch

A couple of big hopes came to nothing: two building workers recruited after the national strike of 1972 (Bob Barlow and Dave Isherwood) soon left WF, and an announcement by RR to the January 1973 National Committee which "reported on the recruiting of two members in Leigh... we already had a strong base on the buses... proposed ratification of Leigh as a branch" - came to nothing. (No accounting was ever made about the affair, nor, to its discredit, did the SC press very hard).

New recruits were made: George Stewart, Sue Arnall and Viv Nicholls; but generally it was not a good period.

SUMMING UP THE PERIOD TO 1973 CONFERENCE

To sum up:

- 1) Useful mass work was done. Unfortunately the comrades had no idea of how a tiny branch of a tiny organisation relates group building with mass work.
- 2) Specifically they had illusions in the possibilities of building straight from the mass struggle, by-passing the established left.
- 3) Logically, the standards of recruitment were incredibly low - without an understanding that a group such as ours, in our conditions, with our tasks, is a propaganda group (albeit a fighting, interventionist propaganda group); that it can only build itself seriously on a basis of first educating possible recruits in our programme and politics (that means - and we must spell it out - WF's specific ideas, our understanding of the Trotskyist tradition; everything that is basic to our movement and what is specific to WF).

Only thus could vague expressions of support from some Leigh busworkers (when the two mentioned by RR were asked to join, they refused) lead RR to announce the setting up of a new branch in Leigh. Only thus could we have had the experience we did with the two building workers mentioned, Bob Barlow and Dave Isherwood. With Bob Barlow, the comrades had some difficulty persuading him he should be in the union! With Dave Isherwood, as soon as it came to a serious clash with the CP - which might mean losing job possibilities - he folded up and had to be asked (on SC initiative) to resign.

- 4) The educational level was low and there was little cadre development.

THE CASE OF JOHN CUNNINGHAM

The exception to (4) above might seem to be John Cunningham.**

** Actually a better case could be made for Chris Corcoran as an exception. He wrote an article for WF 15 on the "British road to socialism" which is quite impressive for a comrade of less than one year's political experience. But there is an interesting point here. The first draft of that article was full of IMG conceptions - "the job of the revolutionary party is to explain a rounded conception of the world" etc. The IMG representation in Bolton was not particularly powerful or impressive, but CC's discussions with IMGers had contributed as much or more to his education as WF had. And it was not a matter of CC having any conscious sympathy for the IMG - simply of having unconsciously picked up ideas from them.

JC is dedicated, active and serious well above the average. He functioned as RR's "lieutenant" and thus appeared a developed 'cadre'. In commitment yes, in education no. He learned little politically from RR except parochialism, and unctuous self-righteousness as of the Pharisee who begins his prayers "O God I give thee thanks that I am not as other men are".

Nothing ever expressed in writing the attitudes of Bolton parochialism so crudely as a letter JC wrote to MT in July 1973 - an awful mixture of more or less frank abuse ("ivory tower" etc.) and the aggressive self-satisfaction of a caricature self-made man with great achievements to his credit (we in Bolton, where workers are workers...) It would be interesting to reproduce that letter. But it is impossible. JC, as he explained to the joint Manchester/Bolton/Steering Committee meeting at 1974 Conference, later removed the letter from the files and destroyed it - so ashamed of it had he become.

SM was so incensed against JC as a result of that letter that the other members of the SC - the uncaring, insensitive zombies - insisted on a discussion of how he would relate to JC when he arrived in London (September 1973) - quite rightly arguing that any confrontation with him over the letter and the Bolton sickness of which it was a part would at that stage be counter-productive.

Even at that stage there was a contradiction. In articles and letters from Bolton JC was self-righteous, censorious, aggressive. In extended discussions with other comrades (MT, certainly) he was reasonable, constructive, open-minded - "altogether a very impressive comrade in his willingness and ability to learn", as AH put it in a letter already quoted.

In London, the "holier-than-thou" attitude disappeared. His work load tripled and quadrupled. He has been one of the hardest-working people in the whole group. He has had far more grounds for self-satisfaction. But the self-righteousness is no longer there.

Two conclusions. First: the parochialist smugness was, fortunately, alien to JC's character;

and psychological needs

Secondly: Given dedication and the will to be a revolutionary, a comrade poisoned with the Bolton sickness can be re-educated. We hope that this will prove true of some of the DCF comrades, as it has with JC. They like JC are capable of making a serious contribution to the organisation.

THE 1973 CONFERENCE

RR, by early 1973, was unemployed, and was spending a lot of time studying economics. The National Committee asked him to collaborate with Phil Semp on the economic perspectives document for the 1973 Conference. Through no fault of RR's, the collaboration never came off, and at the conference (16-17 June) RR presented a document of his own.

Since RR's document appeared only on the day of the conference, the Conference decided to postpone a decision on the question of economic perspectives to an extended National Committee meeting which was held on 19th August. RR was not the only comrade disagreeing with the main economic perspectives document presented by Phil Semp: Sean Matganna and Stephen Corbishley also expressed criticisms. And MT - now cast in the role of one of the chief persecutors - actually supported RR at the conference. Taking RR 'at face value' as someone with a serious grounding in economics, the objections raised against RR's document seemed to him carping.

A decision on the question of our attitude to the Labour Party was also postponed, because discussions on the National Committee were not yet sufficiently clear for the membership to be able to take an intelligent decision. As regards the differences on the Labour Party, RR did not at this figure very largely; the main debate was between MT on the "ultra left" and SM on the "right". (So much for JSr's and RR's picture of a monolithic 'centre' campaigning against RR).

In the two months between the Conference and the Extended National Committee, there was an extensive and democratic discussion on the questions of economic perspectives and the Labour Party. Two thick internal bulletins were published and there was a series of regional meetings. RR was given full opportunities to present his views; there was absolutely no bureaucratic suppression, nor any sort of campaign of scorn or sneers against RR.

This discussion produced a considerable clarification and interchange of ideas, and by the Extended National Committee there was a high level of agreement between the great majority of the National Committee - except RR.

"THE CORRECT MARXIST PERSPECTIVE"

In the discussion a number of criticisms were made of RR's document.

- a) It contained simple illiteracies in terms of Marxist theory: e.g. it referred to the "pre-capitalist, pre-world market Nation State identity...". In fact, the creation of nation states was one of the most notable achievements of the bourgeois revolutions: "Independent, or but loosely connected provinces, with separate interests, laws, governments, and systems of taxation, became lumped together into one nation, with one government, one code of laws, one national class-interest, one frontier, and one customs tariff" ('Communist Manifesto')
- b) Its perspective of "an approaching deep economic crisis" was extremely vague and backed up by a very shallow analysis. The analysis amounted to listing the obvious signs of instability - "the growing number of bankruptcies and failures, swindles of huge proportions, frantic takeover bids, and the threatened break-up of solidarity and mutual co-operation of the Western Imperialist Alliance" - and threading these into a taken-for-granted prediction of capitalist collapse. As the exact nature of the crisis, about all the document had to say was that it was "deep" and "approaching".
- c) RR did not understand the most elementary points of the Marxist theory of crisis. He ignored the normal cycle of capitalism from recession to upturn to recession (lasting roughly four years in recent decades, roughly seven in Marx's day) and spoke only in terms of "long cycles", of 20 to 30 years' duration (a concept with no solid base in Marxist theory; indeed, a concept argued against by Trotsky in his article "The Curve of Capitalist Development"). RR's analysis said we had had a boom after world war 2 based on reconstruction after the devastation of the war and the crises of the '30s; now that boom was ended and capitalism was going downhill. Even if this analysis had some anchoring in Marxist theory, it would be far too generalised to give any concrete indications for political activity. But the fact is that the post-war reconstruction boom actually finished around 1949-50.
- d) RR had a mechanical conception of the decay of capitalism automatically leading to the decay of reformism. In his document he put it this way:

"When the last period of prosperity for British Capitalism (and consequently its workforce) was over (1850 to '70s) the ruling class still had the 'empire' to retreat to and the economic possibility of continuing to bribe layers of workers by using the super-profits of Colonial exploitation. The present boom period which is ending a century later finds the British Ruling Class with no such economic possibilities. The British workers, as a class, will undoubtedly need to go through a defeat or major setback before they are convinced of the nature of the tasks which face them but nevertheless once stung into action there will exist the real possibilities of building a truly mass and truly revolutionary party**... There will be no Mass Turn to the Labour Party...."

No-one was saying, is saying, or has said, that there will be a mass turn to the Labour Party in the near future. The implications of RR's stress on "no Mass Turn", and "no.. economic possibilities", can only, therefore, be a scenario of capitalism declining, reformism declining, the revolutionary party growing, all in a straight-line fashion. The trouble is that it's not so simple. In severe economic crisis the working class unfortunately will not immediately turn to Workers Fight. Workers will first rally to the organisations they know (such as the Labour Party - though much less so if the Labour Party is in power) and will be won over only by political struggle.

More serious is the idea of "a defeat or major setback" being necessary before a revolutionary radicalisation. It is the ultra-left sectarian gibberish of frustrated mass activists who, disappointed by lack of immediate mass success, say 'the workers should have a good whipping, then they'll listen to us'. It is no doubt psychologically grounded in the experience of RR in pseudo-mass work in Bolton, and records the point at which the fresh and heady wine of mass activity turned into the vinegar of the soured propagandist who looks to the capitalists to apply the "cane" so that the working class will listen.

** Compare the DCF platform p.26, where they denounce the Open Letter for saying "This simmering crisis offers tremendous possibilities for recreating a mass revolutionary workers' movement". Or do they think the Open Letter would have been all right if it had just added another clause to that sentence - "provided the working class suffer a major setback" !

Trotsky somewhere did say that the revolution needs the scourge of the counter-revolution. But major defeat leads not to radicalisation, but to despair, apathy, and renewed bourgeois democratic & social democratic illusions.

This "correct Marxist perspective" is even more dangerous when linked with the DCF's notion of a serious immediate Fascist threat. In this case "defeat or major setback" can only mean Fascist victory - and RR's notions become exactly those of the Third Period Stalinists. Why should we fear a fascist victory; it would be beneficial, burning away the dross of reformism, and clear the way for a truly mass, truly revolutionary party.

Of course RR didn't mean any of this. His ideas about the threat of Fascism are not thought through - they are simply a reflection of the fact that the NF has put up a candidate in his local duck-pond, Bolton. Nothing is actually thought through to its logical conclusions.

Still, ideas do have their own logic. Comrades of the DCF, you would place more stress than us on the immediate danger of Fascism. Do you really endorse this claptrap of RR's?

RR AND THE DISCUSSION

All these points were argued very gently, patiently, and diplomatically. MT, having discussed with others on the SC and changed his view of RR's document, engaged in a long and detailed correspondence with RR. We hoped to wean RR gradually away from this muddle and integrate him into the leadership of the group.

The discussion did have a visible effect on RR - by the Extended National Committee, as we shall see, his confidence in his ideas was visibly shattered. But he didn't actually change his ideas - he just defended them with less confidence.

RR didn't have enough general Marxist knowledge to take points of criticism of his document and assimilate them one by one. Either he had to abandon his idea of himself as an "economic expert" or he had to stick to his document, every dot and comma. And he didn't have enough self-confidence to endure the blow to his pride entailed in recognising his own efforts in economics as ignorant (though we tried to create the best possible conditions for him to do so without having his nose rubbed in it).

In hindsight, it might have been better to launch a vigorous assault on RR's document. RR was not yet so demoralised as to simply fold up under such an assault - after fighting back he might have been reintegrated.

THE EXTENDED NATIONAL COMMITTEE MEETING, 19-8-73

These were RR's contributions at the Extended NC:

On economic perspectives

"RR: Has bent the stick in order to counter the vagueness of PS's document. It was necessary to spark an interest in the group on economic questions. There have been long periods of capitalism when the boom-slump cycle hasn't been pronounced and others when it has been very sharp. RR's thesis was that we were entering such a period. Must oppose vagueness in economic perspectives - they must be used as a guide to action. Vagueness was OK for those who had developed a knowledge of economics but this meant the development of an elite."

On the Labour Party

"RR: The working class did have illusions in the LP, but these had been largely overcome. The problem was one of no alternative - we should be building that alternative rather than recruiting to the LP".

Two points arise from RR's contribution on economic perspectives. Firstly - RR assumes that the basic analysis of an immensely complicated situation can be simple. He confuses scientific work with popularisation. He confuses scientific precision with definite, cut-and-dried predictions (generally, in economics, more a sign of quackery than of scientific rigour). He - implicitly, at least - thinks everyone can master every science, he equates specialisation with elitism. Without specialisation, however, there can be no science. RR himself in his essays in economic analysis is a sad proof of what such attitudes lead to. If a little learning is a dangerous thing, learning so little that it

knows not its own littleness can be fatal in politics**,

Secondly: RR notably says no more for his economic analysis than that it "bent the stick" and was intended to "spark an interest". I.e. he retreated. This retreat was made very practical when RR announced at the ENC (out of the blue as far as the Steering Committee were concerned) that he was taking a partial leave of absence for some months (in fact it was to be over a year) to do up his house on a council grant.

One other issue coming up at the NC caused a great deal of argument and raised the question of 'parochialism' in Bolton once again. The Steering Committee had proposed that JC - who had just then left college - should move down to London to help at the centre. The group was making greater demands on the centre, the centre wasn't really able to cope properly even with its present commitments, and thus the centre needed more people.

RR said that the Bolton branch would suffer, and John Strauther and John Cunningham said that since the division of labour at the centre was so bad, sending further comrades to the centre wouldn't help. MT spoke against JS and JC, saying their attitude was "appalling". The running of the centre is every comrade's concern. If the centre is run badly, then comrades should propose a new method of operation or propose the present comrades working at the centre be replaced by others. It is a totally petty-bourgeois, parochial attitude to say "the centre is hopeless and we won't have our own local work hurt for the sake of trying to improve it" (See Extended NC minutes in IB no.15).

Incidentally we should note that the DCF's claim (platform p.41) that opposition to JC moving to London was motivated by concern to train him first is pure invention. We asked JC what he thought about this point, and he replied:

"DCF's claim re my training is basically just another form of parochialism - where in the organisation could a comrade get the kind of experience of work at the centre and in London. OK, so I'm not wearing a cloth cap, but I've probably learnt more in London than I would have elsewhere".

Long afterwards - at least until JC detailed evidence of parochialism in Bolton at the joint Manchester-Bolton-SC meeting at 1974 Conference - RR was to bemoan the loss of JC - not on the grounds of JC's training, but on the grounds of the unfairness to Bolton of losing him. In striking contrast, the same RR has never failed to express contempt and lack of constructive concern for the problems of the Manchester branch which has successively had SM, RL, MT, AH, JW, and SCy - all the Steering Committee bar BH - siphoned out of it.

AFTER THE EXTENDED NATIONAL COMMITTEE: PROBLEMS

After the Extended NC, as we've said, RR went on a partial leave of absence. Bolton WF dropped to a low ebb, and there was little communication between Bolton and the rest of WF.

Rather than "campaigning against" Bolton WF and RR, the Steering Committee tried to help. John Strauther, who then recently moved up to Liverpool, was asked to give some assistance to the Bolton branch. Neither JS nor the Bolton comrades, however, favoured this suggestion.

As we've already noted, RR was first asked to act as regional organiser for the north west back in 1972; not even RR, presumably, will say that, or the formal NC decision in March 1973 to make him Manchester regional organiser, was 'persecution'. In fact, however, little had come of these arrangements.

THE QUESTION OF MANCHESTER/BOLTON FUSION

The idea of fusing the Manchester/Bolton branches was first put forward informally on 18th July 1973, and formally at the November 1973 NC. Since various charges of persecution etc. have been made, we will discuss the matter in detail.

The Bolton parochialism question was already an old one, as we've seen. Nevertheless, Bolton was until mid-1973 an efficient branch, and we had hopes of the parochialism healing peacefully and gradually. When the idea of fusion was first aired by SM in July 1973, he did see it as pulling the Bolton comrades into a broader political arena where they would have to fight the other left groups and emerge from the cosy but artificial world of Bolton.

** There is a link to RR's SLL miseducation, which taught him an idea of Marxism, as the philosopher's stone, an instant recipe for universal knowledge.

That was a conscious consideration, but, initially, a secondary one**. The primary motive was to help Manchester WF, which had been a shambles, more or less continuously. The organisational efficiency and drive of Bolton could help, we thought; but there was also the broader and more sophisticated political scene of Manchester could provide vital assistance to the Bolton comrades' development, as could co-operation with the more experienced and educated comrades in the Manchester branch. None of this figures even remotely, though, in the DCF's account (p.37); the idea that political experience from anywhere else could teach Bolton anything is simply not considered.

Helping Manchester was, however, stressed as primary. However, the very act of proposing to RR - not for the first time - that Bolton help with the problems of Manchester immediately put the matter in a different perspective. He talked of the problems of Manchester not only as if it were a different group or maybe something on the other side of the Atlantic Ocean - but as if the Manchester comrades were some inferior sub-species. The needs of Manchester, the importance of Manchester to the group, the great possibilities in certain industries - these did not interest this National Committee member and nominal area organiser. The Manchester problems simply fed his self-satisfaction about the "fine situation" in Bolton (five members, though there was a big public meeting that night). This smugness henceforth entered as a major part of the problems of the area.

The idea of fusion was first proposed informally, as we've said, on 18th July 1973, by SM, after a public meeting in Bolton. In November 1973, the situation being bad both in Manchester and Bolton, it was raised formally on the National Committee. That NC referred the idea to the next NC for further discussion.

At the December 1973 NC, SA and VN from Bolton and NW from Manchester attended in addition to the NC members. After discussion the Bolton and Manchester comrades were not convinced fusion would be a good idea, and the proposal was dropped for the time being. It should be said that neither RR nor anyone else put forward the DCF's theory that "The motivation for the fusion of the Bolton and Manchester branches grew out of this campaign (against RR) and the centre's desire to put paid to the growth of opposition in Bolton" (DCF platform p.35). They could not have done so; there was no campaign against RR (or if there was, where is the evidence, comrades of the DCF?) - and no-one from Bolton had expressed any political differences with WF since the Extended NC.

Moreover, members of the National Committee, or anyone else with any political experience, & some common sense would find the idea that fusion could be used to bureaucratically "put paid to" political opposition laughable. What do IS and IMG do with opposition groupings? Do they try to integrate them into larger branches, giving them a bigger audience? No: they try to shut them off in little branches of their own, where their political criticisms can't reach very far. WF's approach, on the contrary, has always been to try to bring political differences out and discuss them fully.

There is one thing which Manchester-Bolton fusion may "put paid to", if carried through successfully: that is Bolton parochialism. We plead guilty to wanting to "put paid to" Bolton parochialism.

Anyway, as we've said, the comrades in the area didn't want fusion, and the issue wasn't pushed. What was agreed was co-operation between Manchester and Bolton for educationals, but unfortunately that never really worked out. (Like all the other proposals for co-operation, coordination...)

EA LY 1974: HOPES OF IMPROVEMENT

However, in the first months of 1974 it looked as if things were getting better. Bas Hardy had been sent up from London to Manchester for a period, and was giving a big boost to the

** This was after the 1973 Conference but before the Extended NC. There was no possibility of the fusion proposal being somehow a part of engineering a defeat for RR at the ENC (how could it be, anyway?) - by then it was pretty clear RR would be in a minority. However, it was a fact that the letters of RR to MF on the economic questions had uncovered the provincial backwater nature of the world of the Bolton branch. RR had, without any self-consciousness, revealed (in a letter to the then National Secretary, not private correspondence) that he had spent all of four months studying economics. This touching naivety was possible only because RR's experience had been confined to a backwater. Apart from his time in the SLL, with its lack of any internal life, he had encountered only odd stragglers from the various groupings on the left.

work of the branch. In Bolton, activity increased round the Council of Action. Andy Shallice was recruited in January 1974, and Ian Heyes in February 1974. On 2nd February 1974 MT visited Preston to discuss with RR and Bolton to attend a Bolton branch meeting; some agreement seemed to be reached on the need for avoiding illusions in the Council of Action, and there were plans for all the comrades entering the Labour Party.

At the February 1974 National Committee a long Political Resolution was passed, with RR voting for it. Clause 6 of this resolution read:

"Comrades should join the Labour Party and seek to turn wards and YS branches outwards..."

In the discussion, RR said:

"In retrospect, RR thought he was wrong on the Labour Party. The disagreements had never been more than purely tactical - RR was never taking any ultra left line of totally dismissing the Labour Party; he simply thought it was better to build up independently a while longer before entering the LP. But given the actual sluggishness, it does seem there was a need to press before".

In Internal Bulletin no.18 (February 1974) there was an article by RR criticising an economic assessment of the situation written by JW which appeared in IB no. 17 (December 1973). That too, despite the pontifical tone - "the author allies himself with bourgeois economists and political commentators", etc. - was a good sign. The Steering Committee did not react with any "hysterical and near-paranoid campaign"; we welcomed the article as a sign that RR was coming back a bit from his withdrawal from Workers Fight, and relating to the discussions in the group. JW replied to RR in IB no.20 (April 1974), and we asked RR to take part in drafting the perspectives documents for the 1974 Conference.

RR AS STUDENTS' UNION PRESIDENT

There was one incident during this period, however, which indicated something very wrong. RR stood for students' union president at Chorley College, where he had started in September 1973. His election slogans were:

"Bring a Serious Attitude to a Serious Position"; and

"For a 'Mature' President in a Mature College".

The only part of his manifesto which could be supposed to have the most remote connection with socialism was a section which said:

"We need more female students taking part in Union activity".

If we are to stand for paid official positions on that basis, what difference is there between us and the reformist careerists? What will RR's platform be this year when he stands as Treasurer? The presidential manifesto was indeed parochialism carried to its worst limits! No-one demands that the election manifesto should have bristled with Trotskyist phrases, but RR should at least have stood as a revolutionary socialist.

RR, the democratic centralist, did not consult the organisation as such before putting out this manifesto, but we did find out about it in informal discussions later. It was a serious failing on our part not to take the matter up at the time. Why not? Mainly because we didn't want to harm the process, which seemed to be taking place, of RR recovering morale and becoming reintegrated after his rebuff at the Extended NC.** We were very wrong. However, our mistake was not in "campaigning against" RR - but just the opposite; being too soft with him.

** SM did repeatedly urge the Manchester organiser (NS) to take the matter up. For MT, add three further considerations (none of them excusing failure): when first shown the manifesto, I was simply too taken aback to find anything to say; I was under the impression that the presidential post was a sinecure and the election a formality; and then it seemed to be too late to do anything about the accomplished fact of the manifesto.

THE DECISION TO FUSE MANCHESTER/BOLTON: JUNE 1974

In early 1974, to recap, we were hopeful of reintegrating the Bolton comrades. RR was asked to work on the perspectives document for 1974 Conference and to speak at the Labour Party school which WF organised on 27/28 April 1974. He did neither, nor did he give any apology or explanation. Our hopes proved unfounded.

Manchester WF declined again after BH returned to London, and the Bolton Council of Action broke up in bitter conflicts just before the February election. Neil Duffield - then secretary of the Council of Action, but not a member of Workers Fight - walked out of the Council of Action with a number of other people after his draft leaflet on the election had been rejected. Labour Party work in Bolton did not progress, though SA was getting involved in Rochdale.

Given RR's renewed retreat, the absence of lasting improvement in Bolton or Manchester, and the fact Jack Sutton in Manchester had come round to the idea of fusion, the June 1974 National Committee finally decided to merge the Manchester and Bolton branches. The decision was taken without long discussion, for the simple reason that the question had been discussed at some length already. RR didn't turn up for the NC.

The fusion was, let us repeat, in no way a measure "against" RR or the Bolton comrades - it was an attempt to help both Bolton and Manchester WF, and to try to bring RR back into WF more. However, the problem had shifted further since July 1973. When fusion was first put forward, it was a proposal to merge the good points of both branches. When the decision was finally taken a year later, Bolton was no longer efficient, let alone "super-efficient".

At the WF Conference in July 1974, a joint discussion of Manchester and Bolton WF members together with the Steering Committee was arranged so that the issues of parochialism and cliquism could be put fairly and squarely before the comrades concerned.

We put it to the meeting that a clique had developed in Bolton. The 'ingredients' of this clique were:

- a) the parochialism which had existed since 1972;
- b) RR's domination in the branch;
- c) RR's withdrawal from the national life of WF.

The Open Letter from Sue Arnall which appears in IB no.22 records one reaction to these ideas. A number of comrades quite sincerely found the charge of cliquism difficult to understand.

FROM PAROCHIALISM TO CLIQUISM

Inevitably in the Bolton branch RR dominated. In any circumstances it is inevitable that in different regions individual comrades will be influential, there will be local 'leaders'. It is even inevitable that there will be sub-groupings which should be honestly defined as personal followings of individuals. So far, RR's domination of the Bolton branch is neither extraordinary nor surprising.

But what prevents a political organisation from being an anarchic coalition of local fiefdoms and spheres of influence? It is democratic centralism. Democratic centralism ensures that elements of "fiefdom"-ism don't disrupt the organisation. The influential leaders form a national collective, discuss together, relate first and foremost to the leading committees (except in extreme conditions of sharp differences and clearly defined factions), the local leaders act locally as agents of the leading committees. In short, the influential leaders are integrated into a collective which functions in a disciplined and democratic way. Without that you do get "warlordism", fiefdoms, cliques, centrifugal tendencies.

After RR's semi-retirement in mid-1973 his domination in Bolton was less clear-cut. Even then, however, it was strong enough to draw comrades who are not cliquists by normal disposition and temperament into defending RR against all criticisms. But what was crucial was that with his 'retirement' RR simply was not integrated into the national structure of the organisation. Increasingly Bolton became an independent state inside WF. Instead of the "fiefdom" tendencies being an element within a general democratic centralist functioning, they became an anarchic revolt against the organisation.

One example, LPYS work, will show this. After one year of the idea being aired, considered,

and finally subjected to intensive discussion, the group decided on entry work in the LPYS (with work in the LP as a subsidiary, primarily aimed at helping in the youth work). The Bolton comrades disagreed. But under democratic centralism the decision covered those who disagreed as much as those who agreed.

Bolton was particularly important - in fact a keystone of the strategy we worked out. We argued we should combine trench warfare with the 'Militant' (unavoidable in some areas and anyway educational) with a flanking movement, building new LPYSs where 'Militant' did not control as our independent base. Bolton and the surrounding areas, where there was a vacuum, and we had people, was central to that strategy.

What happened? Nothing. The national leadership, trying to coordinate and integrate a national strategy, democratically decided on, found itself not in control of what happened. True, JC's move from Bolton created difficulties. True, the Labour Party may not have been cooperative. But it should have been tested, with a serious struggle, not a couple of half-hearted sallies.

That is one example - but no small one. The most favourable period for entrenching ourselves in the L.P.Y.S. and reaching working class youth was the period of polarisation between the Tory government and the trade unions. Resistance in the LP was less; resistance by working class youth was probably less, given the general hatred for the Tories. Even now with Labour in power there are still opportunities in the LPYS. But we are lacking in essential self-criticism if we fail to record and learn from the fact that through sluggishness and lack of decisiveness by the leadership, we have missed serious opportunities.

We do not blame Bolton alone, nor primarily. We blame the SC for sluggishness in general and specifically in Bolton. Looking back now, seeing the missed opportunities, it is our firm conviction that we should have been ruthless with Bolton and RR. We should have resisted RR's retreat and interminable leaves of absence, and brutally descended on the Bolton branch to force the comrades either into line with group policy or out of the group.

The penalty for our failure was the growth and consolidation in increased virulence of the attitude in Bolton which saw any attempt by WF outside Bolton to influence their activity as 'bureaucracy'.

A final element in generating the Bolton clique was RR's decision to set up as an expert on economics, and his rebuff at the Extended NC. Here we get political quackery, belief on the part of RR in his own mission to free the rest of the world from bourgeois method in economics, coupled with the usual symptoms which affect the rejected prophet; deprived of the necessary honour "in his own country and among his own people" - feelings of persecution, soon to be fed and cultivated by John Strauther.

Given all this we have had in Bolton a clique, which showed and shows signs of developing into a malignant cult. Only this malignancy has developed in an otherwise healthy body which has resisted its development and will not hesitate to resort to surgery if necessary.

The clique was not originally a clique deliberately constructed by taking comrades out of the mainstream of WF; it was formed initially through the fact that the Bolton comrades, dependent as they ^{were} on RR as their local organiser and National Committee members, were never integrated into the mainstream of WF. We do not mean that any of the Bolton comrades, even RR, are incorrigible cliquists. No. We hoped to overcome the cliquism and parochialism by fusing the branches. But it didn't work.

THE 1974 CONFERENCE

At the 1974 Conference, RR's withdrawal from WF was very clear. Although he then clearly disagreed with the WF policy on the Labour Party (despite his statements at the February NC) he said nothing in the session on the Labour Party. In the session on organisation, he said:

"There was confusion (?) over the Labour Party as a framework for activity. Anti fascist work should take priority over LP work".

It just so happened that Bolton council of action had now transformed itself into an Anti-Fascist committee which was the main area of work for Bolton WF...

The clearest example at the Conference of RR's withdrawal from WF came, however, over the elections to the National Committee. The history of small revolutionary groups is unfortunately only too replete with examples of ludicrous episodes in factional struggle. WF has now added its own absurdity. Who ever heard of a comrade with a minority position refusing to stand for the leading committee a short while before forming a faction, part of whose recruiting pitch is that he is being persecuted by those who tried to force him to go on to the leading committee?

RR was clearly at odds with WF. He was withdrawing from WF. The possibilities, therefore, were these: either (a) RR would be brought back into the national life of WF, and the issues ~~would be thrashed out~~ politically; (b) RR would leave WF; or (c) RR would remain in WF, but neither a loyal nor a serious member of WF, thus becoming the centre of a cliquist abcess in WF of ever-increasing malignancy.

RR was nominated to the National Committee. He refused, saying there were undefined 'personal reasons'. In the interests of democratic centralism, the conference, on SM's proposal, insisted that RR should stand for the NC. Unfortunately or otherwise he was not elected. Conference insisted on the principle that it should decide whether he stood for the NC or not, and then, having made the point, decided it didn't want him on the NC. Perhaps that reflected a mature and balanced judgment. However it can only have alienated RR even more from the group, and John Strauther interpreted it all as a plot (See section "The Persecution...")

RR's withdrawal from WF was also shown at the conference by his walking out of both the joint Steering Committee - Manchester/Bolton meeting and the NUT fraction meeting.

At the SC-Manchester/Bolton meeting, RR, having contributed little or nothing to the discussion, left pleading "a headache". He showed his feelings by brushing past JC on the way out; JC, you see, had broken the cliquist rules by discussing the question of Bolton in an objective way at the meeting.

Despite being the students' union president at a teacher training college, and despite being specifically instructed by the National Committee to do so, RR has never related consistently either to the WF student fraction or to the NUT fraction. He has argued - remember we are discussing a believer in democratic centralism, indeed a guru of democratic centralism! - that his duties as president prevent participation in the student fraction. This approach - either perspectiveless activism, or careerism (as per election platform - is possible only on a basis of no idea of a party at all! When, recently, the college planned a sit-in, he refused to tell the local organiser, NW, about it on the grounds of the need for complete secrecy. IS and "Socialist Worker" knew more about the sit-in than did WF, with a member as union president!

HOW WE TRIED TO FUSE THE BRANCHES

After the Conference, we set to pushing through the fusion of the branches as harmoniously as possible. As the attempt progressed, we were more and more astounded by the depth of the parochialism in Bolton.

The Bolton comrades never thought the fusion was a good idea. There were various problems raised about travelling distances (some of them real: but some of them obviously artificially inflated - a glance at the map will show that RR in Tyldesley and SA living between Bury and Rochdale are not particularly nearer to Bolton than to Salford.) Very well. If that was the real issue, a rational reaction would be: "I don't think it's a good idea, but let's try it out and then we can reconsider after a while".

Instead there was a continual stream of complaints against fusion. Initially, in 1973, the fusion had been seen as a technical, organisational piece of juggling. The parochialist resistance, linked to all the rest of the political problems outlined above and elsewhere, transformed the question of fusion into a major political question.

Were we a national democratic centralist organisation, or not? We said yes, and we set out to fight for the interests of the group. Some comrades raised concrete objections (e.g. IH's problems). RR said very little, as a matter of fact. His eloquence was of the silent sort, but had all the force of sabotage and passive resistance.

With the entry of ND & EM (see below), tumescent with parochialism and localist pride and miseducation, the political importance of not retreating became paramount. It was not a

matter of saving the SC's "face" (or SM's "face"), but: A) of fighting against parochialism and implicit federalism, and for a democratic centralist WF; and B) of fighting to educate new and vigorous (and therefore potentially valuable) comrades in WF politics.

Fusion has been depicted as bureaucratic, arbitrary, artificial, destructive - the product of a bee in SM's bonnet and of the SC passively going along. This was JW's picture. A look at the actual history shows a very different picture. We admitted in advance that certain practical problems, of a limited and manageable scale, existed. It would certainly be less comfortable for the Bolton comrades. We never denied it. Weigh those problems against the political problems and needs, however, and they are insignificant. If, in the judgment of the NC, the political development of the area, or of the Bolton grouping, demands such an arrangement, then the NC has the duty to insist on it. The degree of fanatical resistance, lobbying, campaigning, sabotage (evoking so very much more activity and interest than any other event in group life - even RR on Women's Liberation comes out of the needs of the Bolton situation!) has only made the NC and SC absolutely sure that the problem had to be tackled.

Nor was it a bee in someone's bonnet, rushed through thoughtlessly. A year passed between fusion being proposed and its being decided upon by the NC. Previously various formulae had been sought to get more links between the Bolton and Manchester groups, to get each one to help solve the other's failings (the original, untenable, area branches; RR as regional organiser; etc.) Contrary to the myth of the "super-efficient" branch in the period up to the NC's decision, Bolton had declined because of the general downturn, JC's moving out, and RR's preoccupation with rebuilding his house. SA was certainly active on a serious level - but arguably there was as much case for her to be in a Manchester branch as in Bolton. (In fact the sacred Bolton unit was, within itself, scarcely more logical than the present Manchester branch).

Because of the decline in both Bolton and Manchester, SM was convinced for months before the NC decision that fusion should be forced through - that things couldn't be worse. He didn't press it because some Manchester comrades whose views he respected were convinced that it would be impossible or very difficult to work in a joint branch with cd. Ratcliffe's pedantry and pretensions - even if RR's presence were more token than real.

It was when things in Bolton and Manchester got so bad that Jack Sutton became convinced that fusion was worth trying, and as a direct result of that, that SM proposed to the NC (June 1974) that the branches be instructed to fuse.

There followed a period of pseudo-fusion, the old branches actually continuing as before as "cells" and a fictitious branch committee (composed moreover of a 50% rotating membership!) as a fictitious link.

In August SM was sent by the SC to reorganise the branch. Did he barge in with pre-conceived notions and brutally override the local comrades? Make your own mind up. First he consulted most of the comrades privately, including SA, RR, and IH. The diagnosis was that what was wrong now was the fictitious character of the fusion. The solution, to have a unitary branch with a proper branch committee, was arrived at in discussion with JS, and NW, the NC members for the area, together with NS.

Then two attempts to get discussion of the problem had to be abandoned because of the low attendance at the meetings.

On 7-9-74 SM sent out the following circular to the branch members:

The next meeting of the Manchester area branch will be held next Tuesday 10-9-74 at the "Lass O' Gowrie", Charles St, off Oxford Rd, starting at 8pm sharp.

This meeting, which will have as the main item on its agenda the reorganisation of the branch, is a "summoned" meeting. That means that this special branch meeting takes precedence over all other or routine work, TU branch, Trades Council, Women's Lib, Anti-Fascist work: over everything else. Any member absent from this meeting will face a formal enquiry by the branch as to the reason, and if the branch considers the explanation insubstantial will face formal discipline by the SC, not excluding placing membership of the organisation under review for any absentee whose explanations are considered inadequate, frivolous, or which show a lack of seriousness and responsibility towards the organisation and its tasks in this period, in the view of the branch or the SC. Where a "couple" are both

members of the branch, babysitting problems will not be acceptable as a reason for the absence of either of the comrades. (The Branch could, in view of the large number of comrades with this sort of problem, usefully consider establishing some sort of regular creche; but for this time comrades will have to make their own arrangements.) Nor will any other 'family' considerations or problems be acceptable as an excuse for non-attendance. In general there are far too many "good and adequate" reasons and excuses offered and too easily accepted by the branch for a lack of revolutionary seriousness which almost amounts to a social democratic way of life in the branch.

A "summoned" meeting is an exceptional and extreme step. As a matter of course the organiser in a democratic centralist organisation has the right to call such a meeting at his or her discretion. In this case, however, because of the unusually easy-going way the branch (and indeed the organisation) operates, the SC has first been consulted and therefore comrades are thus summoned to this meeting on the direct authority of the SC. This course was recommended to the SC by the comrades present at the meeting last Thursday evening.

The Manchester area branch is, frankly, in a state of chaos. In the last year things have, despite some recent but inadequate improvement, got worse not better. It is no more than slight exaggeration to say that we simply lack a serious political presence in the Manchester area. This is shown in recruitment figures, literature sales, branch debts, credibility (or even organised contact with) competing groups). At the same time we have under-used resources here which should amount to an exceptionally effective branch. We have in this area an industrial presence exceptional for any area of the country and even for most other "groups" in most other area. The situation of waste, chaos, and under-utilisation of our resources cannot be allowed to continue any longer. The reorganisation of the branch is a matter of extreme urgency. The organisation and Manchester especially is monstrously ill-prepared for the imminent big battles in the class struggle - and we haven't got all the time in the world.

In addition to the general problems that have long existed the "fusion" of the ex-Manchester and Bolton branches has been botched, largely through 'compromises' and evasions. Arguably the situation re: fusion is worse rather than better. Certainly the spirit and purpose of the fusion, as conceived by the NC, has been and is being frustrated.

All the work now ^{being} done - and much work is done: the problem is that it lacks coherence, political direction and integration - T.U. work, Women's Lib. work, etc, is, and must be, in the last analysis meaningless unless integrated into the work of building the organisation and fighting in the class and against competing tendencies for WF politics.

That is why this meeting must take precedence over all other considerations....

Four summoned meetings were held, three devoted to patiently thrashing out the problems. No proposals relating to the problems the NC was concerned with were made by RR. SA proposed not a unitary branch, nor a Bolton/Manchester cell structure, but a multi-centred organisation; Salford, Bolton, Manchester. The problem there was we simply didn't have the cadres.

At the end of the third meeting a unanimous vote was carried for a unitary branch (ods. voting within the general NC decision that the branches should fuse). The vote for a branch committee was not unanimous.

The fourth meeting, to discuss the details, was the first ND attended. Immediately he announced that he would fight the fusion... SM left Manchester and the messy discussion continued, disrupting meetings, etc. etc. From that came the eventual proposal for a moratorium. Throughout the SC and SM pursued fixed aims - ending parochialism, etc. But the means used were absolutely flexible. There were no bureaucratic methods used. To say there were is to say that from the beginning the NC didn't have a right to decide. That takes us back to the basics: a national democratic-centralist organisation or a federation?

INCREASING FRICTION

ND's letter in IB 24 indicates typical arguments against fusion. ND sees problems and inefficiencies in the branch. Right? Maybe. But, does he work out ideas to solve those problems? No - he simply concludes (this at his first ever meeting, mind you): 'the branch must be dissolved'.

But to many comrades that letter in IB 24 will appear relatively reasonable (though it is full of factual errors and distortions). The real flavour of Bolton, however - the quite hysterical hostility to the SC, from a member of about two weeks' standing - is to be found in a letter ND sent to JC accompanying a copy of his IB article. We append this letter so that comrades will understand that things haven't appeared to the SC in the same light as to most uninformed members.

The enclosed circular has been distributed to the Manchester/Bolton branch, and I have sent one to Joe Wright for inclusion in the IB. I am sending one separately to yourself and Andrew because you have both lived in Bolton - though from what I hear were your opinions on the Manchester/Bolton fusion you must have learned far less here than I gave you credit for.

Is it really true that you maintained that work in Bolton has been exaggerated, that the potential was never what it was claimed to be?? If so your time in Bolton was wasted and you must have spent most of it in the wrong places.

I'm coming down hard on you John, not because I want to alienate you but because I want to try and shake you loose from the cloud cuckoo-land of Gifford St. The fog in that area must indeed be dense; it seems to envelop all who go there.

Think again John! Your links with the working class are few and poorly developed. Your world is the world of committee men, not workers. That is not a condemnation, but merely a statement of ^{the} fact that there is a hole in your revolutionary make-up, a hole which is sadly shared by too many of the people around you.

The potential in Bolton is enormous. The work already done, though pot-marked by failures and thoroughly insufficient, is still a tremendous achievement. Sean seems to judge it completely from the point of view recruitment - a return to the IS syndrome. Whatever has gone wrong here in the past, fusion with Manchester will only make worse. Years of work will be wasted and WF may well collapse here altogether. I'll say no more. Read the circular.

This, we must remind our readers again, from a new member of a couple of weeks' standing; obviously reflecting RR.

In those circumstances, growing friction was inevitable. Every inefficiency and failure in the branch becomes a cause for increased friction. RR and his co-thinkers, instead of looking for ways to improve the branch, use each such case as new fuel for complaint against the branch. The failures multiply, and so do the complaints.

THE QUESTION OF THE BRANCH COMMITTEE

RR's attitude in that period can be illustrated by one particular issue: the question of whether or not the united Manchester-Bolton branch should have a branch committee. The case for a branch committee should be obvious for an experienced Trotskyist: branch meetings of 15 people could not possibly discuss every detail in full without becoming hopelessly bogged down, so a smaller committee should deal with routine matters, formulate proposals, etc.

Two members of the former Bolton branch, Ian Heyes and Sue Arnall, put their objections to a branch committee in writing.

Letter from SA to Joe Wright, 26.9.74.

I am opposed to the idea of a Branch committee really quite simply because I regard it as unnecessary (if we have regular branch meetings) and harmful to the overall development of the Branch members. I think that what happens is to encourage the growth of a central few who do all the running about and worrying while the rest of us cop out..."

Letter from IH to the National Committee, 22.9.74.

... all this work plus educational's and we are expected to accept that four members of the branch are to be burdened even more by involving themselves in the branch committee. The Bolton members feel this will curtail our activities still further.... I do have other reasons for opposing the Branch Committee conception. I know from experience in Committees in the Trade Union movement that committees, however good their intentions, always they end up being bureaucratic, they tend to make decisions for other members of the branch, the members end up being errand boys or girls as the case may be.

There is nothing particularly terrible in new members (in IH's case, a new member reacting against experience in the bureaucratic CP) expressing such ideas. But it should be elementary for someone with any experience in Trotskyist politics to say they are wrong. SA's argument is logically opposed to any delegation of responsibility, logically as much within a national organisation as within a branch. The only logical form of a revolutionary organisation on that basis is a collection of small autonomous local groups: i.e. a Leninist, centralised party is impossible.

The work of coordinating WF activity through a branch committee is not just an 'extra burden' - it is necessary if the work in different area is to be integrated into a coherent strategy. And to compare committees in a revolutionary organisation with committees in trade unions is wrong. Committee positions in trade unions bring privileges with them - they often involve direct contact with and pressure from the employers - and they are based on a membership which is usually largely apathetic and inactive. Committees in a revolutionary organisation involve no privileges (just the opposite, usually!) - rather than being the part of the organisation most subject to capitalist pressure, they bring together the most experienced and advanced comrades, and thus should be a politically leading part of the organisation, able to take an overall view without getting their vision restricted by one special area of work, as individual comrades will tend to do - and they are based on an active and critical-minded membership.

All this should have been elementary for RR to point out. But what did he do? He acted as a lawyer for confused ideas. He devoted himself to producing sophisticated arguments to justify such ideas.

The parochialism of Bolton continued to show itself in other ways. For example, despite anti-fascist work being the main activity in Bolton, not one comrade from Bolton except Sue Arnall (whose attitude towards WF has been a hundred times more loyal than that of other Bolton comrades) supported the national WF mobilisations for anti-National Front demonstrations in Leicester on August 24th or in London on September 7th. There may have been some good reason for this, but if so the Bolton comrades certainly didn't think it necessary to inform us.

THE RECRUITMENT OF NEIL DUFFIELD AND EILEEN MURPHY

On 4.9.74 the Steering Committee decided to admit Neil Duffield and Eileen Murphy as probationary members of WF. The question had been referred to the SC because the local comrades were doubtful. ND and EM had a record of individualistic, ego-centric, and disruptive behaviour. Take for example the episode in the Council of Action referred to earlier. This is how it was recounted in a letter from SA dated 4.3.74:

"... Neil's leaflet was read out to the Council of Action meeting on the 21st February and rejected in favour of an alternative written by Andy (WF) and Steve (IMG) which said 'Vote Labour but continue to fight' - and went on to say fight in several concrete ways e.g. Miners, Shrewsbury 24, Engineers, Railmen, etc - This was felt to be far clearer and more constructive and was passed by 28:3. Neil was 'insulted' and tendered his resignation as Secretary, saying he was clearly not in tune with the feeling of the Council of Action. He was very abusive towards members of left-wing groups.....

There was a further meeting on Feb 28th (a Social) at which Neil and three of his supporters resigned from the Council of Action, saying it had become a talking-shop for left-wing groups out of touch with the Working Class. These four intend to set up a 'Propaganda Group'..."

On another occasion, thwarted in some way or other on the Trades Council, ND threatened, without any authority at all, to disaffiliate his UCATT branch.

In the light of the record since, the SC was mistaken to admit ND and EM as members. But how our decision can be fitted into a scheme of 'persecution' of RR, we do not know. In fact we have furnished RR with his most vocal and energetic supporters!

Why did we decide to admit ND and EM? SM had written to JW as follows:

Regarding Bolton, Neil and Eileen Duffield have applied to join. The Bolton cell wants them to work for a period with the group. They are somewhat odd people, but

after a discussion with them I think we should accept them as probationary members. They are rather humourless but extremely serious comrades, and might make a qualitative change in the Manchester area branch. There is a history of conflict between them and the Bolton cell, but it appears manageable, and the Bolton cell is relatively objective. I found that the analysis of them given to me by Sue Arnall before I went to see them tallied with my own impressions and was quite balanced and fair. NW, who was there too, agrees. They disagree with us over the LP tactic but are willing to accept group discipline on the matter. Given their bitterness on the LP and its record on the rents issue in Bolton, this is a major step forward, I reckon, though there would be problems of application because they would be virtually working alone in their LP which is not good given their reservations.

The major sticking point is that they are involved in a theatrical group (Eileen used to be an actress, Neil works as a carpenter in the local theatre) and produce a duplicated publication called 'Grass Roots' which is circulated free to about 50 people whom they regard as close contacts. They want to continue with that, and take the line that if WF demands that they drop it then they would have to reassess WF because whatever the general correctness of WF, such a decision would be so destructive of their work that they would have to add it to the balance sheet and reassess WF (rather like us and the FI and our local work: which is a fair enough argument except that the proportions are all wrong - such a decision by WF to scrap 'Grass Roots' would even if stupid, as they think, not have the importance of, say, our differences with the IMG on the General Strike etc.) There is a definite parochialism about this approach. But parochialism is, it seems, a peculiarly Boltonian disease, and they are no worse than our own comrades and in terms of seriousness in practical work considerably better than all except Sue A.

We should not evade the fact that on 'Grass Roots' they are giving us an ultimatum and that, I think, is the main reservation of the Bolton cell. In strict principle, we might be inclined to draw a line with them and say no ultimatums - the organisation and the branch must decide on priorities and allocation of resources. I want to advocate a more flexible approach.

'Grass Roots', about 14 pages in size, is little more than a 'bulletin' aimed at a special milieu. There is little in it that couldn't go in WF. I think we should evade the ultimatum implications (without pretending to ourselves that it doesn't exist) and accept that they should go on with GR. How will it evolve afterwards? Given Neil and Eileen's track record, I think that once involved in the problems of the Manchester branch, as they will become involved, then Grass Roots will diminish in importance for them and be allowed to die: they will use WF (Neil is an excellent writer) and worry about the branch, not a vague collection of 50 contacts. GR is very much a case of "their thing" just as the Council of Action tended to be a substitute for a political organisation for them - until it fell apart from internal frictions and marauding expeditions from the different groups.

If we are flexible and diplomatic we can ease them into the group and I think they will be invaluable if we can integrate them. Sue A. whose opinion I value agrees about their probable development once in (how the personal frictions will develop I don't know: but things couldn't be worse than now in both Bolton and Manchester). I see no principle involved (remember 'London Worker' and 'Northampton Voice'?) And the street theatre group would, it seems to me, fit in very well with our conceptions of building the YS, turning it outwards. Apart from the fact that the Bolton comrades might want a voice in it I think the SC should decide on the lines outlined above.

We were wrong, not on ND/EM, but on the health of the branch. We said simply "these people are active and dedicated revolutionaries" (which they are) "we should be able to integrate them". We haven't been able to. We were wrong - in being too ready to hope for the best, too soft... not in being 'bureaucratic' or persecuting anyone!

Where, specifically, were we wrong? In this, that we said the branch should be able to integrate and re-educate them, and if we can't, when they offer to accept group discipline on questions like the Labour Party, then we are very sick. We underestimated, still, how

sick the branch was.

THE MANCHESTER AREA BRANCH, SEPTEMBER 1974

We underestimated how sick the branch was; despite the fact that the letter from SM to JW already quoted (1.9.74) gave the following far from rosy picture:

It would be too much here to go into details of discussions I've had with comrades. With Jack, Naomi, etc I've gone through all the details of work/problems/prospects/Failings etc. Proposals have emerged and these will be discussed at the Manchester cell meeting on Thursday, which we are trying to turn into a full branch meeting, though the Bolton comrades disagree... Things really are pretty dire, I'm afraid. Naomi as organiser was seen as part of a team with Neal (Smith)... This has never worked... Naomi is active and other comrades are, but the threads don't come together. Jack with his union experience would be the ideal organiser... The clearest analysis of the problems of the branch has come from him. He has agreed to work as a team with NW (i.e. help guide her activities).

Not the least of the mess is that the fusion has been botched and really the old condition continues with the branches renamed 'cells' and also one or two extra meetings added as part of the pretence of fusion. The nominal branch committee has met once. It's just a fiction: the various compromises and concessions AH agreed to to placate Bolton were a grievous error, I believe (Jack agrees).

I plan to force the two cells into one branch, focused on Manchester, meeting regularly there, concentrating on public meetings there etc. Bolton work can be like Salford work (re: contacts what this means is obvious); in addition there can be the occasional public meeting etc. etc.

A majority for this is assured, but Bolton will fight. I will be as gentle and diplomatic about it as possible - but no more compromises in substance with the Bolton nonsense. (Even the Bolton cell work as cell work amounts to very little, and they have only one respectable argument against full fusion: one comrade would be late for most meetings. They are even said to regard a stable branch authority to plan and organise the branch as... 'elitist'!)

I'm not, I believe, making the mistake of making Bolton the scapegoat: I stress it here because it is the one area where I may have to (and if necessary will) invoke the formal authority of the SC to change things. My perspective is to get some sort of a mechanical functioning under way before I leave Manchester and then keep close contact/supervision. I got a lot of things moving last March - which stopped when I left... That can't be repeated. The great tragedy is that while we are floundering and failing etc. we have really important resources unused - for example Ian Heyes is site convenor on his job, two months after starting work!

Incidentally this excerpt should scotch the nonsense that anyone (e.g. SM) has made Bolton or RR the scapegoat even for local failings. It should also scotch the allegations that clique ties exist between the SC and its "loyal" "followers". Actually Neal Smith could make a better case that the SC has persecuted him with harsh criticism than can RR! But NS is a political animal, and, to quote J P Cannon on a similar topic, his "mother taught him not to whine when he gets hurt", or so it appears!

We did not underestimate the potential problems with ND & EM - and the fear of friction between them and RR reads ironically in the light of the present alliance. (Ironic enough in its own right, especially on the Women's Liberation question, given that ND & EM had already publicly denounced RR in writing as a male chauvinist - it is, perhaps, a pity that at that time ND had yet to develop his theory that a paragon of revolutionary virtue like himself has a duty to punch male chauvinists, otherwise ND & RR might have had difficulty reaching their present cosy alliance!)

But - amazingly - we did still underestimate the degree, the depth, and the self-righteous incorrigibility of Bolton parochialism. We did not appreciate the utter and absolute demoralisation of RR - who initially viewed the entry of ND and EM with some trepidation, though he agreed to it, as did all the 'Bolton cell'. We did not appreciate that he would clutch at any support he could get and ensure that, far from helping to turn the branch

present each other with lawyerly arguments in defence of positions some of them disagree with!

This faction has not emerged from any coherent political struggle or recognisable line of political development - other than the politics-by-implication line of Bolton cliquism, parochialism, and latterly cultism and RR's almost megalomaniac 'economic' quackery. Their list of complaints we have, we hope, shown to be self-centred a-political whinings. They hang together on disparate gripes and grievances rather than politics. Their platform contains massive elements of sheer factional dishonesty.

Their accounts of the motivation for the proposals for fusion and the methods used in pushing it through are utterly false, as we've demonstrated.

They slander the majority of the Manchester branch now, as they have previously used them to feed a sick self-satisfaction.

"Just down the road... there was a branch full of loyal followers... As a group actively engaged in the revolutionary struggle they barely functioned at all".

Let us see. Harold Youd founded the National Port Shop Stewards Committee. In 1968 he fought a vigorous campaign against Powellism when even the best militants round him were conceding to racism. For years he has fought for revolutionary politics on Salford docks. Jack Sutton has built up the union branch in his hospital from virtual non-existence to the point where it is in the vanguard of almost every important national struggle in the NHS. Did HY and JS do these things because they are just mindless toadies of "the centre"? Can any of the DCF comrades point to a comparable record? No - it's just that JS, HY and the other Manchester comrades don't swell up with self-satisfaction, like the DCF, at their own achievements (real in the case of JS or HY), nor do they howl like the DCF when someone suggests a criticism or a different policy.

The DCF slander the majority of the organisation, where it suits their need to present democratically-arrived decisions as an imposition by a centre which they describe as comparable to the Stalinist bureaucracy! (p.34)** On Labour Party work, the DCF document declares (p.39):

"... the centre decided it was all the membership's fault, that the tactic had to be strengthened and now... 'every comrade to belong to the LP and work actively in it as no. 1 political priority".

Fact 1: The whole NC membership, including RR, voted in February 1974 for a resolution stating "Comrades should join the Labour Party and seek to turn wards and YS branches outwards..."

Fact 2: The formulation "every comrade to belong to the LP and work actively in it as no.1 political priority" was proposed by Dave Spencer, and not in fact voted on by Conference. It is not group policy. Group policy is that industrial work is our no.1 political priority, and Labour Party work is secondary to that.

Fact 3: The resolution that every member of WF must work in the LP unless given NC or SC exemption was, again, moved by Dave Spencer, and passed by the whole WF Conference, with no-one speaking against.

Apart from indicating the general level of honesty as regards facts on the part of the DCF, this example is instructive as to what the DCF's idea of 'bureaucracy' is. Evidently it is anyone outside Bolton trying to influence their own little

** We will offer RR a deal on that one - if he will provide us with the comfortable country house, the wealth and the privileges of the Stalinist bureaucracy, we will accept his criticisms on that point. And in return we'll leave him in Bolton to write the story of the crimes of the agents of the "Gifford Street Archipelago", without forcing him to experience life in a labour camp or chained up in the dungeons which John Strauther, at least, seems to imagine exist in the cellars of Gifford Street!

plans in Bolton. Anyone, be it Dave Spencer, be it Naomi Wimbourne, be it the whole WF Conference, that tries to do that is automatically identified with the villainous 'centre'.

The DCF complain indignantly against charges of parochialism, non-political opposition, etc. without one single attempt to answer specific charges that have been made. They can't answer them.

There is no consistent thread of politics anywhere.

RR in February 1974 says he agrees with the WF majority on the Labour Party - in July 1974 suddenly announces that Anti-Fascist work is where it's all at - fails to speak in the Conference debate on the Labour Party - and now comes forth with pages of angry denunciation of the villainous 'centre' which has imposed work in the Labour Party on WF. (Or, more to the point, on Bolton. If we would only leave Bolton alone RR would probably ignore a raiding expedition by the majority of the group into the Young Liberal organisation!)

RR in June 1973 comes forward with a document on economic perspectives which two months later he says was just "to bend the stick" and "spark a debate". When asked to collaborate on the perspectives document for 1974 WF Conference, he does not write a word. When he receives PS's draft Economic Perspectives document at the January 1975 National Committee, he does not even bother to read it before announcing that PS's document represents "bourgeois method" and that he will write a factional counterblast to it. He then describes his 1973 document as "the correct Marxist perspective".

During the real struggle to get over the ideas of women's liberation in WF (in 1973) the minutes show RR as uttering not one word. When he sees a conflict between Sue Arnall and the WF leadership on the question of housework, RR jumps in with a lengthy screed in defence of "the class of women", attempting to put words in SA's mouth - and reactionary ones too.

In 1972 RR declares that the comrades at the centre 'need not understand more theory' and preaches mass work and activism. In the DCF platform he endorses the view that 'theory is the strongest practice' and pours scorn on ideas of building a mass revolutionary party.

Originally RR responds to the regroupment initiative with conservative suspicion, and ND refers to the RMC as "Handley and his cronies - they only call themselves the RMC when it suits their purposes". In the DCF platform regroupment appears as the big chance for the "renewal of Marxist method and politics".

In no way does conscious Bolshevik politics guide RR or the DCF. But if there is no conscious politics, there is a definite class coloration. There is the petty bourgeois attitude of pride in the local 'shop' you have built in Bolton, in 'your very own' correct Marxist perspective. It is an attitude which leads only to the disruption of any democratic centralist organisation. Trotskyism historically arose as a defence of international socialism against the nonsense of 'Socialism in One Country'. We at the moment fight the same fight on a more modest scale - against an implicit programme of "Socialism" (?) in one suburb of Manchester!

WHERE IS RR GOING?

RR is in his own way another Ken Stratford, about whom in his time RR was witheringly contemptuous (IB 7). Both entered the group at a time of furious activity when we were being expelled from IS and many new people entered. Many new, unknown and inexperienced people were brought onto the NC in those early days - people who appeared impressive and represented something politically or even a geographical unit. Like most comparisons, whether with Burnham or Proudhon, the one with KS is even flattering to RR. KS has at least a record of sticking around in politics, if only nominally. For the first nine months of his membership of WF he worked seriously and hard, with dedication and considerable personal sacrifice (he was unemployed and worked full time for the group). RR was less active, less dedicated, anything but self-sacrificing, though he lasted a bit longer than KS until semi-retirement in mid-1973.

He retired, hurt, baffled, and without either the conviction and the courage to fight the centre, or the revolutionary seriousness and dedication to subordinate himself to the majority. He has played little part in the life of the group since 1973; even a remarkably small part in the discussions on a unitary branch in September 1974 in Manchester. But now he has been galvanised into a decision to form the DCF.

Propped up on one side by John Strauther**, dripping poisonous paranoid nonsense about a conspiracy against him into his ear, and on the other by ND and EM who are their usual ego-centric, and hysterical, but extremely vigorous selves, RR "leads" the "DCF" into battle. The spectacle reminds one of nothing so much as the story of El Cid, dead but propped upright in a suit of armour and tied to his saddle, "leading" the medieval Castellians into battle against the Moorish hordes!

Except that the Castellians won, and the DCF can do no more than scatter itself in futility in all directions - Strauther perhaps into the IMG, ND (who now holds the reins of RR's horse!) god knows where... And RR? However alive El Cid must have looked when the horse was moving, it stopped eventually. So did he... But let the dead bury the dead - we have an organisation to build!

* * * * *

** For whom see section 'The Persecution...'

AFTERWORD: THE QUESTION OF CLIQUISM

"...teams of unusual effectiveness may form as a result of working closely together in difficult situation or during sharp outbreaks of the class struggle..(But) They serve as models only so long as they clearly advance the party's general political positions. If they do not do this, if they come to feel that they constitute a special group against the interests of the party as a whole, then... it becomes a clique" (J.Hanson: 'The Abern Cl.')

Cliquism is especially complicated to recognise precisely in practice. The question of cliquism relates closely to the problem of building your own little bit of socialism now and to the view of the organisation as a haven here and now rather than a fighting army of the proletarian vanguard on the march. Its essence is the same sort of subjectivism - in clique situations, personal relationships, mutual adjustments and accommodations over-ride political considerations, wholly or in part, episodically or regularly. The effect on the internal life of a revolutionary organisation is a variant of the effect of unprincipled combinationism, as defined by J P Cannon:

The opposition is the worst and most disloyal of all types of factional formations in a revolutionary workers' party: an unprincipled combination. Combinationism is the worst offence against the party because it cuts across the lines of political principle; it aims at an organisational decision which leaves the political and principled disputes unclarified and undecided. Thus, insofar as the combinationist struggle is successful, it hampers the education of the party and prevents a solution of the dispute on a principled basis. Unprincipled combinationism is in every case the denotation of petty bourgeois politics. It is the antithesis to the Marxist method of political struggle. ('Struggle for a Proletarian Party' p.31)

It could, perhaps, be said that unprincipled combinationism is cliquism on a large scale, except that at least the different political positions are known and defined. In a clique they are usually blurred over - for a number of possible reasons.

Cliquism is difficult to define precisely because it takes elements normally present to a pernicious point. People normally form friendships, normally accommodate, often leave aside nuances of difference in the interests of collaboration against a major common enemy or in practical work etc. We've noted that inevitably individuals will have varying degrees of influence. A clique, however, is present wherever mutual personal adjustments or tolerance of failings etc. reaches the level that it overshadows and overrides the dictates of politics, rationally and rigorously worked out according to the needs of the class struggle and of the organisation.

The politics becomes secondary, position is traded off for position, the prime concern becomes to hold on to each other's hands - and sacrifices are made in terms of political clarification to maintain the personal relations.** Again, this is only a malignant extension of something normally present - within any team, there will be specialisation and comrades will defer to experts - for example on a complicated economic analysis.

To recognise the point at which the normal and not necessarily unhealthy elements of personal considerations, friendships, mutual adjustments, etc. cross over into cliquism - those elements dominating over political needs, allowed to work themselves out logically and fully - that is difficult in most cases. Cliquism exists in all sizes and degrees. It requires a degree of experience to recognise - and people may be drawn into clique relations without being aware of it. Thus some comrades in the old Bolton branch objected to the suggestion there was a clique. In retrospect it would have been better to say elements of cliquism existed. But already at the joint meeting held at the Conference nine months ago some of the looser talk of Bolton cliquism was concretised into a conception

** To give a very crass example from Bolton; at one of the discussion meetings SM said something to the effect "let's try so-and-so and see if it works". RR launched into a tirade against 'empiricism' - and in return received one against ignorant phrasemongering. Later in the meeting IH said pretty much the same (there aren't all that many ways of saying it!) RR kept absolutely silent. It would be nice to think he had taken the point. No - he was avoiding stepping on IH's toes. Yet a serious man in RR's position would have regarded SM as incorrigible and would have been ten times more interested in correcting IH.

of the elements of cliquism arising : A) because of RR being surrounded by mainly inexperienced people; and B) because of his lack of integration into the leadership of the organisation: the result being an immature branch resting heavily on the personal domination of one individual, himself increasingly alienated from the leading bodies of the group and leaning for support and personal consolation on his local comrades.

SA was mystified and argued that RR was less dominant than we thought. That was, by then, and for a while previously, true because of his inactivity. But cliquism is much more complicated. Comrades can be drawn into defending RR and a regional group, without losing the power of cutting loose, but still being tainted by the essence of cliquism - the predominance of personal relations, loyalties, defence of individuals or a 'branch' at the expense of politics. By its nature cliquism is insidious, especially where geography provides a natural 'unit' and a framework.

It would have been better if the Bolton situation had been analysed more concretely before the last Conference - it is, we repeat, a fact that the Bolton/RR situation has revealed itself to us in layers. Since the conference the elements making for the transformation of the clique into a cult have been recognised as of increasing importance. Previously we had simply observed that personal relations (certainly before RR lapsed into semi-retirement) predominated. This fact appeared of greater or lesser importance according to the general situation. It only began to appear pernicious with the opening of the battle against parochialism and against RR's retreat after 1973 to dig his own cabbage patch.

Today it is blatantly obvious - or should be - that RR is not the guileless and unwitting centre of a clique, but is an active lawyer, in search of clients - nothing else can explain the sudden interest in women's liberation and the production of the pusillanimous rubbish he has circulated.

Before it was less obvious - yet the SC (with the partial exception of JW) never doubted the existence of cliquism. Why? Because WF has a lot of experience with cliques and cliquism. It was this experience that 'persecuted' RR, that rose up against first the cliquism, and then the incipient cultism.

Since it is our purpose to compensate for having to write on the unrewarding topic of RR and the DCF by providing some educational material, we will discuss the main experiences of the group with cliques and cliquism.

THE ENTRY INTO IS, 1968

1) At the very start of the group, we suffered a split over the question of entering IS of half the Manchester group (four out of eight). This was a politically motivated split but it took the form it did because the four comrades related to each other as old friends and associates first and foremost and to WF second. The WF group was only just taking shape - but the loss was a serious one (one of the four had 17 years' experience; another had been on the National Committee of the YCL).

THE CARVER CLIQUE, 1969 TO 1971

2) From early or mid 1969 a clique around Glyn Carver existed within WF - and was soon recognised and named as such. This clique had vague politics; its members went together as a family with GC as clan chieftain. At each juncture, personal likes and animosities cut across and poisoned the atmosphere of the group, debilitating it politically. At all points the clique had hangers on (e.g. Geoff Hodgson) or relatively independent associates (e.g. AH). They would have split the tendency a number of times but for the fact that they had close links with AH who - with one momentous exception - behaved politically towards the group. The clique was fundamentally a family circle of admiring friends round GC.

Its fate was to split from WF in July 1971. Its 'politics' at the time of the split were based on one main plank for the Tendency - opposition to the call for a General Strike! Everything else was to be matter of a series of campaigns against the IS leadership. GC now functions as an IS hatchet man, apparently with Maoist overtones - but the politics were ever unimportant to him, especially the nuances.

THE JONES-POLAN CLIQUE

A third clique of a different physiognomy, which split in the immediate wake of the Carver

clique in July 1971 was the Jones-Polan clique. Ostensibly these were more political people, and though we recognised the clique element there was never much fuss made about it in the group. (In contrast, there was permanent warfare between SM and the Carverites from late '69 until the split, with AH usually as conciliator.)

But they were a clique all right, and moreover one not confined to members of WF. They were a group of IS members who related to each other as mutual friends and carping critics of IS. Ted Jones, from this grouping, joined WF, and Tony Polan, given the job of re-educating him, instead got drawn into their clique relationship. Within a short time a grouping with ramifications even outside IS (Roy Tearse) existed.

They put forward politics, at first tending to capitulate to IS, later an increasingly passive and sectarian negation of IS. However they never functioned in a dialogue with the WF group. They had their own dialogues, in which they reached their own positions to defend before the rest of WF. They had their own prestige-consciousness, the need to keep face amongst themselves against the rest of us. Even when they were putting forward political positions meriting discussion (and unlike the Carverites they did) there was never a dialogue - just frozen positions based on personal relations and not on declared or previously worked-out principles. They stood somewhere between a tendency/faction and a clique. Certainly we lost Polan because of his being drawn in to the clique.

Ultimately they paralysed the London WF group, and were responsible for the terribly weak state of London WF at the time of our expulsion. Yet the politics were never spelled out and only emerged piecemeal. Eventually they scabbed on us during the fight against expulsion in 1971. In due course they were expelled from IS in their turn. After the split of the more active elements, round Yaffe, to form the RCG, they are left leading a loose grouping similar to the 'Militant' except that it is so passive as not even to be active in the Labour Party or to produce a publication.

THE LEAGUE FOR A WORKERS' REPUBLIC

The final example is not of WF but of the LWR, our former associates in Ireland. Because of the (Dublin) geographical matrix, this has a lot in common with Bolton. It is also important because it shows that a clique in its essence can exist despite frictions and even breaks in the common front.

The LWR leadership (Basil Miller, Carol Coulter, Paddy Healy and others) are a clique formation because time after time they subordinated political differences to the need to stick together, to the exigencies of a common pride before a hostile world, to the needs of a mutually dependent division of labour. Within that there were, inter alia, relations of cohabitation between two of them, bitter recriminations, expressed but contained political differences, etc.

Yet the given definition of given people was never to be questioned. Position was traded for position. When one of the trio was galvanised - by WF - to fight a variant of the 'Two Nations' theory (not one with the pro-British politics of the B&ICO), PH "changed" his position in a weekend, without any accounting. They needed each other and they hung on. They still do. Like the Carverites with IS politics, they eventually blundered into the obscene politics of the OCI.

ON CLIQUISM: CONCLUSION

Politics, honestly discussed, openly thrashed out without fear of the consequences and without favour to personal friends - that is the first organisational law of Bolshevism. Without recognising it you wind up with a mess, no clarity, and thus no possibility of laying or maintaining the essential programmatic basis without which a revolutionary party is impossible. Cliquism is the enemy of everything WF exists to achieve.

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APPENDIX: SECRETARIAT MINUTES 20-1-75, ON ND & EM

The decisions on ND and EM must be carried out to the letter. Discussion on how to 'normalise' Branch life. Pessimism that friction is over and done with; need for a balance sheet re: ND and EM. The Branch and the state it is in is the problem, not D and M -

nevertheless the unhealthiness focused on and expressed itself most clearly in the activities and attitudes of these probationary members. Having let them in and so far proved unable to either contain, re-educate, or assimilate them, it did not follow that we should pay for it by an endless series of disputes.

Nor should each 'incident' be taken in isolation and on its merits: the record as a whole must be kept in mind. The letter to the NC from "The Five" indicated clearly that they had merely abandoned an indefensible political position in favour of 'ski mishing' in the woods and undergrowth of legalities and petty criticisms of the Commission's report: that augured badly for the future - even assuming the good faith of ND in self criticism. Within the Branch EM appears to be conducting a personal vendetta against NW.

DECISIONS: necessary to define and spell out what probationary membership means in terms of apprenticeship in the politics of the group - the formula in the Constitution that probationary members 'have all rights' etc. was adequate in most cases, but did not spell out methods of education, subordination, etc. Clearly inadequate to the D and M case given their political attitudes, undisciplined behaviour, tendency towards personalising issues, etc. Therefore the leadership of the organisation had either to let the situation continue to fester or spell out concretely what probationary membership meant in the specific case and conditions of the two comrades in question.

SM should write in as comradely and unprovocative a way as possible, but nevertheless making it absolutely clear to both comrades that their continued membership of the organisation depended on accepting the status of apprentices in WF politics - genuinely; that in practical work the decision of the Organiser (and Assistant Organiser: see below) have the character of directives for them, whatever they may think on the issues; and that if there are so many disagreements that it leads to permanent and wide-scale warfare against group decisions - then they will have to accept an interpretation of 'apprenticeship' as meaning that they learn from the group, and to a serious degree suspend their own judgment: if they can't do that then they, as well as the Secretariat and SC, will have to consider whether or not their joining WF was a mistake.

It was decided that in the event that there is any disagreement in the Branch on the form of the letter of apology which ND has agreed to address to T. Handley, the matter will be referred immediately to the SC, which will take a final decision on the issue and if necessary draft a letter which ND will be told to sign - the purpose: the NC resolution contains the seed of another interminable Branch dispute on the text of ND's letter.... That Jack Sutton be appointed as Assistant Branch Organiser was also decided, for the following reasons: if we are reduced to a situation where the relationship of cds, M and D to the practical work of the Group is one of being given formal instructions, then confusion can arise, or can be resorted to, along the lines of 'one NC member says this, and another that', therefore room for evasiveness etc. A hierarchy is necessary: the Branch Organiser and Assistant Organiser decide - JS, by experience, commitment, etc. is the obvious choice for this situation. He may also have the effect of depersonalising things a little.

Finally it was decided to recommend to the SC that in the event of new disputes, conflicts and incidents with cds, M and D the procedure should be as follows: the opinion of the Branch Organiser and Assistant Organiser be asked for, and in the event that it is against ND and EM the SC should summarily suspend them from membership.

COMMENT: Self evidently these decisions are of such a character that they require endorsement by the SC to become operative. Whether the SC endorses these decisions or not the Secretariat believes it to be its duty to grasp the nettle and to begin to come to terms with sorting out the Manchester situation once and for all. Some comrades may find the proposal that in the final analysis the relationship of ND and EM to NW and JS should be reduced to one of having to take orders, ^{disasterful} so does the Secretariat - one member of which has spent a good part of the last four months attempting to conciliate the Manchester 'dissidents' and was responsible for recommending to the SC that ND and EM be accepted.

We must however think of the only alternative - that there is a never ending and progressively multiplying number of disputes which paralyse the Branch. Normally in a democratic centralist organisation disputes are settled by reasonable discussion. Sometimes after formal thrashing out of disputed issues a minority, remaining unconvinced, is constrained to accept majority discipline.

In the case of forceful, uneducated, undisciplined, personally antagonistic (to the responsible leaders of the Branch) probationary members who behave like ND and EM, and especially where they do responsible public work, then you either expel them, have endless disputes coupled with no public discipline - or you reduce democratic centralist relations to strict formalism and insist on absolutely formal discipline.

The second possibility is - it is hoped the NC agrees - absolutely ruled out. Expulsion is undesirable and may be avoidable - we should do our best, short of letting the Branch disintegrate, to avoid it. That leaves only a definition of the position of ND and EM as one where they do what they are told to do - argument second; formal discipline first.

The definition of their apprenticeship status as meaning that if there are a whole and widespread range of differences then they must attempt to learn from the group, as opposed to making war on its positions: how does this relate to the right of forming factions and tendencies?

There is no constitutional limit to such rights - in fact there is not even a constitutional definition of a faction (not to mention distinctions between tendencies and factions) Certainly it is a denial of the right of ND and EM to ignore entirely the duties of probationary members; it is to deny them the right to counterpose themselves in the way they have done so far to the leading bodies of the group. As such it is an attempt to limit the right to - in effect - factionalise.

But then that right is not meant to protect new and probationary members who behave as ND and EM have done. They did not enter WF as a tendency - and, whatever the various rationalisations they resort to, the issues are not fundamentally political. There is no reason, for example, why two new people should not join and argue with the group position on, say, the LP - while carrying out the line in practice. When people join and there is a general eruption of disputes, indiscipline, abuse of the leading bodies, hate campaigns waged against such as NW - then definitions of rights and duties interpreted in the light of the actual circumstances are called for. Thus the Secretariat decision. It should be added that the situation with these cds. is not one that is likely to occur very often, but the product of a freak combination of weaknesses in the local Branch, problems of the national leadership, and the personal characteristics of the two comrades concerned.

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APPENDIX 2: LETTER PROPOSING THE EXPULSION OF RR

Dear cd. Ratcliffe,

The Secretariat noted your speech at the pre-conference with RMC on 23-3-75, when you alleged that WF speakers were indulging in dishonest distortion of RMC positions; that this method of polemic was typical inside WF; that you hoped the RMC cds. would fight back; that, specifically, WF speakers were dishonestly misrepresenting the reasons why the RMC was reluctant to join with WF; that WF speakers' methods of argument were directed at distancing the two tendencies.

We have further noted:

a) The NC meeting of 19-1-75, at which our attitude to RMC was discussed, and decisions made, with you present. WF tactics on 23-3-75 flowed from those NC decisions.

b) The national WF circular of 6-3-75, stating, in relation to the pre-conference: "Normal rules of democratic centralism will therefore have to apply to comrades in the 'Democratic Centralist Faction'. The only relaxation should be that (as previously agreed with RMC) comrades may express their individual views on the questions on the agenda, even if those views are not WF majority views, provided that: (a) comrades make it clear they are expressing individual or minority views, not WF majority positions; (b) the views are presented in an objective and comradely fashion, without personalising or factionalising. This means that raising internal organisational questions of WF, factional denunciation of other WF members, organisational obstruction of WF tactics at the pre-conference, or distribution of factional material, must all be considered as contrary to democratic centralism, and warranting immediate disciplinary action. None of this, of course, restricts the freedom of internal factional rights inside WF".

This circular was sent out in plenty of time for any WF member who wished to appeal for a reconsideration of this ruling to do so.

c) The caucus of WF comrades present held during the midday break on 23-3-75. At this caucus, with you present, WF tactics for the afternoon of 23-3-75 were discussed.

d) The fact that the RMC, by refusing discussion on the resolution WF presented to the pre-conference, had defined the situation as one in which all the organisational barriers remained up.

In view of these facts, the Secretariat decided to suspend you from membership and to propose your expulsion at the NC on 12-4-75. You are charged with disloyal factionalism in a public situation where it would do most damage to the organisation. Your speech amounted to plain sabotage of our work towards the RMC, who, as you must know, are morbidly suspicious on organisational questions. For any member of the group, let alone a NC member, to publicly slander the organisation, to publicly parade your delusions of persecution, is intolerable. We will not tolerate it.

You have received every democratic right, and much more, even being co-opted onto the NC. You have been offered every opportunity for integration into the work of the group and of its leadership. You have been tolerated over nearly two years of combining minimal activity with practical sabotage of the work of the group by refusal to accept democratic centralist discipline, over the Labour Party, for example.

Your response has been to cultivate a clique and retreat from the organisation. You show little interest in discussing your differences with the organisation; Manchester and Liverpool branch meetings, and a southern region meeting, where the DCF platform was brought up for discussion, and a north-west region meeting where the question of the Labour Party was on the agenda, produced non-attendance or reluctance or unwillingness to speak on the part of DCF members. It is so much easier to engage in publicly slandering the organisation than to substantiate the same charges in a democratic discussion where those involved are in a position to know the facts.

If we tolerate such behaviour all democratic centralist norms break down. It was the opinion of almost every WF comrade present at the pre-conference that you should be expelled.

Self-evidently you want that. If someone really wants to commit suicide it is difficult to stop them. Obviously you want to get out of WF. At the forthcoming NC the Secretariat will do its best to ensure that your desires are granted.

Fraternally,

S. MATGAMNA

26-3-75

6-4-75

Dear comrade Duffield,

We received copies of your leaflets. A faction is, as you say, entitled to have its literature distributed. Your leaflets have gone out to members of the National Committee and local organisers. Since you only sent 20-odd there will be none left. Let us have about 80 more if you want a full circulation.

A number of points, however, arise.

1) We note the bizarre fact that the secretary of this faction is... a probationary member! Moreover, one incapable, now, of writing other than in the tone and language of hysterical abuse. (If, at this point, you are still capable of stopping and looking at yourself you might do worse than ask yourself how it is that someone who is normally a very lucid and good writer can produce such an incoherent document...)

2) You neglect to mention whether or not John Strauther or Roy Ratcliffe intend to appeal to the NC. Nor have they informed us - and we will be mildly surprised if RR does. If they don't what business is it of yours or of the DCF's to defend them? A faction is part of an organisation - I find myself somewhat embarrassed to have to remind you - if they accept their suspension, then they are no concern of the organisation's or of yours. You should not engage in any political collaboration with them now. There is evidence of such collaboration in your leaflet where you quote Steering Committee minutes you could only have obtained from RR. No doubt you saw them when RR was a member - but you could only quote them as you do if they are now in your possession.

As it happens, I had proposed that the Steering Committee resolution which you quote be circulated throughout the group - and withdrew the proposal only on reflecting that the points which the resolution makes would be made more clearly and thoroughly by the full reply to the DCF platform. However, there are general principles of democratic centralism involved.

Therefore: A) You, as a non-NC member, have no right to see, let alone possess, such documents, I hereby instruct you to send the copy you quote from to the centre immediately. (B) I remind you that it is unconstitutional to discuss internal group affairs or collaborate with non-members of WF (other than in united-front work, etc.) While suspension lasts RR and JS are not members. Their future relations with WF are a matter between themselves and the NC. If they show themselves willing to act as loyal members of WF, no doubt the NC will reinstate them. Meanwhile I formally instruct you that all collaboration of the sort evidenced in your circular must cease and warn you that if it continues it will be grounds for disciplinary action. WF is not a loose discussion circle, comrade secretary of the DCF, but a democratic centralist organisation: a faction will adhere strictly to the organisational norms as defined by the constitution or else, by contravening them, brand itself as disruptive. If you continue as disruptors we will treat you as such.

3) Your attitude to Strauther and Ratcliffe is astonishing for someone who ostensibly wants to remain in WF. There may be grounds for discussion as to whether the level of JS's factionalism, in itself, merited suspension. With RR there are none. Between 20 and 30 members of the organisation witnessed this then member of our National Committee publicly and slanderously accusing his own organisation of misrepresenting and distorting the positions of the RMC. He accused us of distorting the reasons why the RMC resist fusion - thus endorsing their refusal to fuse. Further he publicly accused the WF majority of a similar internal practice.

If this was not deliberate sabotage, it is difficult to know how to describe it. If the serious members of the organisation present applied to comrade Ratcliffe the standards you applied to Tom Handley, then RR would have spent Sunday evening, or longer, at the Liverpool Royal Infirmary. Fortunately the comrades present contented themselves with concluding that RR should be expelled and left it to the leading committees to handle the matter of his sabotage activities.

Yet you defend RR! So be it. (A) Do you endorse his action in Liverpool? (B) If you

do, will you please explain just what your perspectives are in WF? (C) Will you also explain, if you can, why the leading bodies of the group should not demand of you and other members of your faction that you dissociate from and denounce RR? Cd. Duffield - you are either a member of WF, a democratic centralist organisation with certain rules of membership or you are not. At the speed things are moving you haven't got a great deal of time to make your mind up.

4) It is regrettable that RR should be suspended before a reply to your platform appears. The reply should be out soon - 50 pages are already on stencil. Unfortunately it is easier to sit down and churn out a load of ignorant claptrap such as RR's stuff on Women's Liberation than to write a painstaking dissection of it.

You are right when you assert that there is a causal relationship between the fact that the reply has not yet appeared and RR's suspension. But you misunderstand that relationship.

RR knew - could not but have known, even if more naive members of the DCF wouldn't have - that his behaviour on 23-3-75 would inevitably lead to suspension. He wanted to be suspended. Why? Because he doesn't want to be around when a detailed analysis of the gibberish he has written appears. Anyone wanting seriously to discuss the ideas of your faction would be extra scrupulous in observing organisational norms. RR has deliberately run away from a discussion of his ideas. Why? Because he knows what's going to hit him when the analysis of his documents appears: true to the pattern of his behaviour in 1973 and the discussions then he prefers to retire to protect his pride.

I have not the slightest doubt of it.

On the Saturday evening (22-3-75), the day before RR publicly broke with WF, he and I had a discussion lasting over an hour (on my initiative). I explained to him the Steering Committee's view of the inescapable logic of the factional situation that had developed - embitterment, muddying and confusing of all the ideas you want - so you say - to discuss, and very probably the loss to the group of most or all of the DCF comrades. Speaking as an individual I made a proposal to him - that the factionalism be suspended so that a cool discussion, rather than a dogfight, could sort out the conflicts. (If he had accepted, I would of course have had to persuade the Steering Committee to agree). Practically that would have meant two things: i) the disbandment of the DC Faction, or, possibly, its transformation into a tendency - a looser group, necessarily excluding inexperienced and new comrades, concerned to win the organisation to certain ideas, 'methods', etc.; and ii) as our contribution, the SC would ignore the scandalous factional provocations in the platform of the DCF, and would confine its reply to a short cool rebuttal of the political points, such as they are, in your platform. (rather than a factional assault). Characteristically RR misconstrued what I said and accused me of attempting to trade off my political positions "for a convenience"....

I then spelled out clearly and very bluntly what was involved. RR's pose as a serious economics expert can be handled in one of two ways.

Gently, patiently; being careful with people's feelings and not driving them into a corner; keeping friction and conflict to a minimum; treating each issue dispassionately on its merits - if one has the patience. MT had the patience and that's how we handled it in 1973. That's what a tendency discussion would mean.

Or, in a situation of open factional warfare such as the DCF has created, one can strike at the root problem, and expose the fact that the basic irritant ever since RR set up as an economic expert in '73 is the fact that RR is ignorant - abysmally, pathetically ignorant - of even elementary Marxist economics. Inevitably that would drive RR out of the group. But in a factional situation we (the SC) couldn't avoid such an approach. Why? Economics is a difficult and specialised subject. Most members take most of it on trust, according to impressions, general confidence in individuals, a leadership, a faction. There is no alternative unless you want to seriously propose that every group member spends three to four years studying economics as a full time occupation.

RR's problem is that he made "the (!) correct" economic analysis in 1973 after four months studying economics! RR is an impressive comrade who seems to know what he is talking about - so much so that he even, for a period, gained the support of MT for

his quackery in 1973. MI had certainly read more of the relevant literature than RR, but he - lacking confidence in his own judgement as would anyone with a realistic grasp of the intricacies of economics - went on impressions. Later he had difficulty believing his eyes when RR, quite un-self-consciously, wrote to him that before reaching his conclusions he had spent a full four months studying a subject which Marx himself spent many years studying, when the body of literature was immensely less than now.

In a faction fight a merciless demolition job on RR's credibility would therefore be necessary. In his stuff on women's liberation he has already published a recent text where a detailed analysis would show him as an economic illiterate. I spent most of the discussion with RR detailing - very bluntly - economic illiteracy after economic illiteracy in his recent writings. I explained, as above, why the reply to your platform would have to do this publicly. I reminded him of his experience in 1973, his subjectivism and retreat, and urged him to agree to create an atmosphere that would minimise destruction for the group and for individuals, especially himself. His response oscillated between bravado - "I can take it" - and a slightly bathetic querulousness - "If I make so many mistakes why do you want me around?".

Between that discussion and the following afternoon he decided he wasn't going to stay around. No democratic centralist organisation could tolerate his behaviour at the joint RMC/WF conference. He knew that.

If RR wants the NC to sympathetically consider lifting his suspension, let him show seriousness towards the group by issuing a statement to the RMC comrades saying that: (A) His remarks were slanderous and fuelled by factional heat; and (B) were a complete breach of democratic centralism and even of the relaxation of democratic centralist discipline operational at that meeting, under which comrades were allowed to express personal as opposed to group political views, provided only that it was done coolly and non-factionally.

He hasn't even given notice of an appeal to the NC! No, ed. Duffield. RR wanted out. His whole political history is one of dropping out when the going gets rough in one way or another.

5) You write of DCF members being suspended - so far three. I've dealt with RR and JS. You say EM's case is a matter of victimisation after the announcement of the faction.

We never quite know when or whether you believe your own (DCF) tales about being persecuted. Here, however, you know what you write to be nonsense. Long before the paper selling incident (in itself, or taken in isolation, not a 'capital offence') the Secretariat had made a decision. After the massive waste of time and effort on the NF/Tom Handley business, we decided that the next incident involving you and/or Eileen would require immediate suspension. We would have to admit that the local group was too unhealthy to assimilate potentially valuable people, and regretfully cut our losses. I sent out Secretariat minutes (20-1-75) in which over a page is devoted to explaining the whys and wherefores of this decision. RR will certainly have shown you these minutes.

Why is it that a 'faction' which makes so much noise about being persecuted has to twist the record and consciously misrepresent details of one of the very few blows (real, not imaginary ones) you've received.

In any case when was the "Faction" declared? One can understand that you will have some of the details confused in your mind, because, protest as much as you like, the 'DCF' is no more than the old clique dressed up in 'politics' - and it has existed quite some time now. RR muttered something about a faction in January. But what faction? On what platform, with which members? Your suit of clothes, the 'platform', now exists - but, if we want to be pedantic regarding the constitution, the platform hangs in mid air: there are no signatures. That's appropriate given that the dynamic of the Bolton situation is only very vaguely related to any political ideas, including even the nish-mash you call a platform.

I'll ignore the rest of your circular because it would be not only tedious but pointless to bother with such a mixture of incoherent abuse and politically illiterate nonsense.

Yours fraternally,

Sean Matgamna (National Secretary).

PS. You will also find enclosed a copy of the letters outlining the reasons for suspending JS & RR.

THE PERSECUTION AND MARTYRDOM OF

THE PROPHET RATCLIFFE

With the exception of John Strauther, all the DCF comrades have a pretty short experience in the revolutionary movement. Despite the elder-statesman pose he assumes, this is scarcely less true of RR than it is of George Stewart. This means that none of them know much about things like faction fights. Quite possibly, if someone who seems convinced puts the idea to them persistently enough, they do believe that a campaign of persecution, slander, scapegoat-making etc has been conducted against RR. John Strauther knows better, or he should, because he has been around long enough and has seen enough. It is highly significant, we believe, that the idea of the persecution of RR began with John Strauther.

It is a mark of the demoralised state he has got himself into that RR has allowed himself to become convinced he is a victim of persecution. Only lately did he become convinced: shortly after the 1974 Conference SM and HY visited RR and asked him whether he believed JS's interpretation of the move to get him onto the NC as an act of persecution - RR said no.

Unlike most of the DCF members, there are quite a few people in WF who know what political persecution is, what a sustained campaign against individuals or a tendency look like in practice - they lived with it in IS for three years. Let us look at this real example of persecution - and remember that it is not a specially far-out, extreme example; IS at the time was a relatively 'open' organisation compared to what it is now, or what the WRP or, probably, the IMG are.

Gossip through a grapevine? Every incident, real or imagined, spread through the telephone network. Petty personal slanders - big political ones too, like the story that at the 1969 IS Conference WF had advocated the repartition of Ireland, and that Andrew Hornung had advocated mass forced population movements, with cattle trucks for transport as in Nazi Germany. (Sounds exaggerated? It's unbelievable! However, no one need take our word for it. After it had been in circulation for 2½ years one of the central IS leaders, Andreas Nagliatti, with the lack of balance which distinguishes him from more 'subtle' IS leaders, actually put in writing, just before our expulsion.)

And RR? Rumours of problems, etc, are inevitable given the looseness of the group, and given that the problems spilled out into the IB. But a campaign of any sort against RR - no! RR's economic perspectives were rejected after a long and pretty thorough discussion. We didn't shout him down, spread stories against him, or anything! He just failed to convince the majority. True, we have expressed the opinion that one of the fundamental problems is that he doesn't know very much about economics. That's a matter of opinion.

Ghettoisation? From mid-'69, after WF had been in IS six months, the IS leadership adopted a policy of splitting off members of WF into separate branches, with the purpose of cutting us off from the IS membership. Even in Manchester where a proposal for such a split was defeated by over 3 to 1 in the branch, the Cliffite minority split - and thereafter got all the central support, the contacts, the comrades moving into the area, the national speakers etc. while the original majority was treated as a pariah branch. Branches were also split in Teesside and in Acton.

And RR? How is the forced fusion of Manchester and Bolton persecution? In IS we had to fight against being isolated in little ghetto branches. In WF, RR has to be forcibly hauled out of a self-imposed ghetto in Bolton.

The class struggle. The IS leadership did not let considerations about the direct class struggle deter them. During the docks struggle in 1970 Tony Cliff refused (in effect) to speak on his productivity deals book to a meeting of dockers we proposed to organise in Trafford Park. The fact that there had just been the first official docks strike since 1926, that HY, a member of IS and WF, was a leading steward - all this was secondary to Cliff's factional considerations.

There is a worse example. Manchester IS as a united branch had produced a regular fortnightly bulletin for mass distribution at AEI Trafford Park. There was a team of four working round the factory. In the split two went with us and two with the Cliffites, but one who went with us soon changed sides and the other had to move from Manchester temporarily. This gave the minority branch control of work round the factory.

The only contact inside the factory was with white collar members of TASS, none IS members. A few months after the split in the branch, a WF member got a job as a capstan operator. How did the Cliffites react? They refused to work with him. They refused to allow him to meet their contacts. They appealed to the IS NC for permission to treat him as a... contact. The individual concerned was at the time a member of the IS National Committee!

Tell us of your woes, comrades of Bolton.

Participation in group work. How did IS treat us in terms of areas of group work where we had people who were arguably specially qualified? On Ireland we had some knowledge, had been at the centre of the most important revolutionary socialist grouping since the '40s (the IWG). When they set up an Irish Commission they excluded Sean Matgama, a member of the IS NC, from it. When, in 1971, the Commission was discussing articles for a special issue of IS Journal, it was pointed out that SM had done a lot of work on one subject that was to be dealt with - the so-called Two Nations theory - and proposed that he be asked to write. John Palmer, on behalf of the IS leadership, opposed the idea adamantly. Afterwards Eamonn McCann and Brian Trench privately accused Palmer of simply wanting to exclude SM from any participation. Palmer, who is a faction-fighter and not a mealy-mouthed hypocrite, replied: "Yes, exactly".

Examples could be multiplied. And how did we react? We stood our ground and fought back. There were casualties, like Tony Polan, who buckled in the face of a savage baiting session on the NC when WF opposed IS taking a blanket line of opposition to breakaway unionism in the wake of the Pilkingtons experience. Sometimes we flinched from the nastiness. But we fought, politically. What we didn't do was whine. We concerned ourselves not with looking for sympathy for our far from imaginary bruises, or with looking for shoulders to cry on, but with fighting back politically. Indeed we had a major conflict inside the tendency with people such as Tony Polan who wanted to huddle together with any oppositionists or critics.

That is what persecution in a relatively 'open' organisation, which IS was and WF is, looks like. When the Bolton comrades (leaving aside John Strauther for the moment) talk of persecution, 'bureaucracy' etc. they must forgive those of us who lived through that for three years if we say they remind us of a spoiled child so narcissistic that he can't tell the difference between a mild slap on the wrist, or a gentle and basically friendly tug on his arm, and a sustained and intentionally murderous assault with a hatchet.

Has RR been excluded from the central work of the group? We had to fight this serious revolutionary to get him to come onto the NC. He has repeatedly been asked to work, collaborate, contribute - and he has opted out. He was asked to collaborate on perspectives documents; he didn't. 15 months ago or so SM and RR worked out a list of about a dozen articles for Workers Fight on aspects of labour history - that might have helped educate a cadre, perhaps, Roy? - and he agreed to do them. No single one appeared.

At every turn attempts have been made to get RR to do group work, to integrate him into the leadership of the group - at the end, to put it bluntly, motivated by the realisation that he represented a 'constituency' in the organisation, rather than, as previously, that he had much to contribute to leading the group. The last such attempt was his co-option to the NC in December. (Since he had been rejected for the NC by the conference, that was arguably a bureaucratic action by the NC - one which, predictably, the DCF don't pick up!)

John Strauther originally proposed the idea that RR was being persecuted. Strauther is the one member of the DCF who has been around enough to know better. The first we heard of it was a bizarre letter from JS to the SC in which

he felt RR had been put in an invidious position because of (a) the vote to compel him to stand for the NC; and (b) the fact that in proposing a motion to compel him to stand SM had said that, in his opinion, the group should put RR on the NC or, logically, expel him. That was in the speech - the alternatives were not put in the motion, and anyway the group voted to make RR stand for the NC. SM's speech was on the day following the Bolton/Manchester/SC meeting to analyse the Manchester/Bolton problem. One of the main concrete ideas to emerge out of this was that a root problem was RR's lack of integration into the national organisation - even though he was on the NC. After an evening thrashing out the problem, and having reached that conclusion, it seemed to SM that refusal to stand for the NC was an announcement of RR's retirement and that the problems would continue or worsen.

It followed that it would be grossly irresponsible to allow RR to retire further. SM made no previous consultations because RR's refusal to be nominated came in the full Conference session - and, in fact, he believed himself to be making a fore-doomed propaganda speech for a tougher approach. He was surprised to win the vote - very agreeable surprised!

JS's idea of persecution is obvious nonsense. If you are a loyal member of a revolutionary organisation, you are prepared to give all your efforts to it. If the organisation thinks you should be on the National Committee, then you should be on it. In any case, it's a curious way of 'persecuting' dissidents to bring them onto the National Committee. What bureaucratic organisations do with dissidents is drive them off all leading committees!

What SM was saying was this: either RR is a member of a democratic centralist organisation or he is not. If RR is a member of a democratic centralist organisation, then his political opinions are not his own private affair. If he disagrees with the politics of the organisation, it is his duty to bring his disagreements forward fully and honestly, and to abide by the majority decision after discussion, as much as the simplest act of day-to-day discipline is his duty. By refusing to bring his disagreements forward honestly at the Conference or in the National Committee, logically RR was opting out of being a serious member of Workers Fight.

RR's dishonesty was the opposite of democratic centralism and also a glaring example of parochialism. "Let me do and think as I like in Bolton".

No-one on the SC took Strauther's letter seriously - not even Joe Wright. JS has a history of getting things wrong and muddled up and of writing bizarre letters to the SC and/or the paper. When we published a skittish little satire on the IMG's idiosyncrasies with the slogan of "General Strike to bring down the Tories" he actually wrote a letter, which he expected us to publish, accusing us of "red baiting" the IMG! No-one took JS's letter on SM 'persecuting' RR very seriously, though SM was careful to check that RR didn't get the same impression next time he saw RR.

RR AS SCAPEGOAT?

Strauther asserts that there has been a concerted persecution campaign against RR similar to what he saw happen to David Yaffe in IS "or even to SM". RR is being made "the scapegoat" in a campaign of "near paranoid intensity". The motive apparently is that we need a scapegoat for our failings.

Firstly, the letter from SM to JW (that is, to the SC) of 2-9-75, quoted in the section 'Bolton & WF..', demonstrates that even in late 1974, in private SC correspondence, Bolton and/or RR were far from being allocated even the major or only blame for the situation - it was just recognised as an especially knotty part of a general problem.

Secondly, by what logic, reasoning, or fantasy could anyone looking for a scapegoat pick on poor RR who hasn't even been a fully active member since August 1973! How, by what form of twisted reasoning could it be maintained that he is responsible for the manifold failings of the group. For some of them certainly he is, but on a limited partial scale only.

Thirdly, if the problem is defined as a problem of cadre development, how can RR be held responsible for other than the area he has, or should have had, responsibility for? If the problems are defined as lack of perspectives documents etc. how can we be holding RR responsible when (a) we rejected his document in 1973, and (b) the whole SC and most of the NC has since then considered RR as politically quite backward and moreover unserious.

Having worked out his catastrophist perspective in 1973, did RR draw any political, practical conclusions from it about the trade unions, the Labour Party, etc. No - except conclusions of a purely negative sort (keep out of the Labour Party). Actually, given RR's perspective of the economic crisis sweeping away reformism (see IB 14 part 2), the perspectives were of a very passive sort - for the time being, we wait for the economic crisis to sweep away reformism and the 'major setbacks' to radicalise the working class.

For the SC to "make a scapegoat" of someone they saw in this light would be psychologically impossible - in fact it is possible to imagine such a thing only from the angle of the semi-megalomania and all too real paranoia of some of the DCF who believe they do have "the correct" totem-pole politics. Equally impossible for the SC to cynically use RR, for the simple reason that it wouldn't carry conviction with the members of the group.

And fourthly, where is the evidence of persecution? The evidence all points to the opposite attitude to RR. Evidence of a campaign against him? There is none.

Even if the proposal to put RR on the NC against his will was intended as persecution (some persecution!); even if RR was linked to the NF at the regional meeting in Liverpool - that would still be a very feeble campaign. Far from persecuting RR, WF have allowed RR privileges like 15-months leave of absence, co-optation onto the NC, etc., and haven't even formally called him to account for failing to act as area organiser.

JOHN STRAUTHER'S 'EVIDENCE'

Let us look at the 'evidence'. The Conference incident we've dealt with. For the rest of the cogitations on which JS built his theory of the persecution of RR, we have to rely on the Liverpool comrades' reports, for JS is as reticent as he is poisonous.

Strauther travelled to the Extended NC in August 1973 in a car with SC, MT, RL and SM. The conversation, so it seems, was heavily concerned with RR and his 'perspectives'. Not surprisingly so since there was to be a vote at the ENC on them. Apparently the conversation, which included one person who had previously supported RR, was contemptuous of the ideas in RR's documents and not very flattering about RR's economic pretensions. That, it seems, was the germ of the idea of the persecution of the prophet Ratcliffe.

Actually it is evidence of an attitude of paranoid suspicion (".. you should never trust your own leaders more than you have to" - DCF platform p.37), by a professional malcontent whose poisonous and slanderous stories "in defence of" RR add up to a would-be campaign of defamation against individuals such as SM and NW much more weighty and more provable than any alleged campaign directed by the 'centre' against RR.

After all, that car journey was to a meeting where the issues commented on were to be openly discussed. There had been a debate for the previous two months in the group. The people present had openly taken positions. SM had done so immediately on reading RR's semi-literate nonsense at the June Conference, realising that unless a sharp attack were launched there and then, there was a danger that in the confused atmosphere the RR document would get through, thus binding the group to a ridiculously false perspective.

And to discuss the document, including the general illiteracy which produced it, on the way to a meeting that was to vote on it - that amounted to plotting against and persecuting RR? Even if the discussion were tailored to influence JS, which is unlikely but possible (no-one can remember), what was wrong with

that? Nothing was said that wasn't said later in RR's presence at the Extended NC (perhaps in more diplomatic form, in order not to bruise RR too much),

But JS subscribes to the idea in the DCF platform that democratic centralism means "never trust your own leaders more than you have to", and agrees that the proper conclusion to be drawn from the fact that the average SLL/WRPer doesn't believe the tales about the WRP leadership is that generally all tales against all leaderships should be given some credence if not believed on principle! In practice he would deny the SC, or its individual members, the right to critical comment which every rank and file member possesses! This is Souvarinism or anarchism, lacking either the intellectual energy to define itself or the courage to declare itself openly.

THE NORTH-WEST REGIONAL MEETING 6-10-74: RR, BURNHAM, & the NF

The incident where RR is supposed to have been linked with the NF is even more bizarre.

NS proposed to the meeting** that a moratorium be declared on discussion on fusion. SM spoke in support, and, making the point that revolutionary democratic centralism was not a perpetual debating society, quoted J P Cannon from 'The Struggle for a Proletarian Party', where he attacks:

"Burnham's conception of party democracy.. that of a perpetual talking shop in which discussions go on forever and nothing is ever firmly decided"

(SPP p.14)

The quotation mentions the talking shop conception (the conception now pretty plainly set out in the DCF document) as that of James Burnham. In passing, to make the quotation intelligible, SM mentioned who Burnham had been and who he now is, an extreme right-wing conservative. Perhaps garrulously, but for no reason more sinister or purposeful than having recently looked through a file of 'Spearhead', the NF magazine, and having noted and found interesting the fact that the NF were now advertising a book of Burnham's ('The Suicide of the West'), he added that information. No more.

Let us sum up precisely. (1) The point under discussion was a general concept of party democracy. (2) No-one was mentioned by name or, since no-one had then put out a conception similar to Burnham's or the DCF platform's, even by implication. (3) The name of RR was not mentioned. (4) It was not even said that James Burnham was a fascist (he isn't) or that adherence to Burnham's 1937/9 conception of party democracy necessarily led to right wing politics. When Cannon wrote 'The Struggle for a Proletarian Party', Burnham was still a communist and a professed Marxist. Trotsky and Cannon spoke in terms of remaining a disciplined minority if the Burnham-Shachtman-Abern faction should win a majority in the party. It was only right at the end of the faction fight that Burnham broke with Marxism (see his letter of May 21, 1940 reproduced as an appendix to 'In Defence of Marxism'), and some years later again that he wrote the cold-war propaganda which the NF can now advertise.

After SM's contribution, the moratorium proposal was discussed generally, and a number of speeches were made, including one by JS on the 'persecution' of RR. NW, who had recently read 'The Struggle for a Proletarian Party' for the first time, recalled a section where Cannon replies to a charge that Burnham was being persecuted and felt it very relevant and absolutely parallel to the alleged persecution of RR (see SPP section 6). She asked SM to find the quotation and she summarised about two pages by Cannon on the relative privileges Burnham had had. There was no reference to the NF or anything of that sort - Cannon's document, we repeat, was written while Burnham was still a communist.

** All of the ex-Bolton cds. except SA and EM were absent. It was apparently an organised boycott. A meeting of the ex-Bolton cell (now the DCF) was held in the evening, as MT discovered when he went to see RR that evening with a view to discussion.

(one does not, after all, have debates on the question of ^{the methods of} democracy inside a revolutionary party with extreme right-wingers!)

Not long after this EM said RR was being driven out of the group, and said he had already, more or less. She then said words to the effect "oh, I shouldn't have said that". The idea of a withdrawal by RR surprised neither MT (who was present) nor SM. It did spur SM to urge NW, who was due to speak, to quote a paragraph from page 15 of 'The Struggle for a Proletarian Party' where Cannon speaks of Burnham as a typical petty bourgeois intellectual concerned more with his feelings than with the class struggle and generally tending to withdraw.

"The petty bourgeois intellectual, who wants to teach and guide the labour movement without participating in it, feels only loose ties to the party and is always full of 'grievances' against it. The moment his toes are stepped on, or he is rebuffed, he forgets all about the interests of the movement and remembers only that his feelings have been hurt; the revolution may be important, but the wounded vanity of a petty-bourgeois intellectual is more important"

This was the only direct comparison made between James Burnham and RR, and it was one where Burnham was used only as an example of a type - to which RR does belong - rather than an individual. Again, nothing about the NF....

From this came the story that NW and SM had linked RR to the NF in a smear campaign! SA and EM wrote to JW mentioning the reference to the NF, saying they weren't quite sure what was said, hadn't read 'The Struggle for a Proletarian Party', etc. but it was something meriting investigation. Apparently Barbara Wojcicichowska also was shocked at the mention of the NF. It is a mark of the sloppiness of the group that the letter from SA and EM, instead of leading to a discussion in which they were asked to read, at least 'The Struggle for a Proletarian Party' before shooting off protests, was immediately put into the IB. Given the comrades' lack of experience and the general atmosphere of distrust, the reaction is not surprising. Nevertheless it is preposterous that if one of the six members ~~present~~ of the Steering Committee, with the agreement and collaboration of five other members of the NC present, considers it worthwhile to quote from one of the classic texts of our movement, and that provokes misunderstandings, the result should be that the thing was broadcast immediately in the group.

In a YS branch the chain of logic beginning with mentioning James Burnham and the fact the NF is circulating a book of his now, and going on at the end of the meeting to saying that RR now represents a species exemplified by the then communist James Burnham in 1939, might reasonably be expected to cause shock and alarm. In a WF meeting, shock and alarm should lead not to diplomacy and fear to make necessary comparisons, much less fear to quote a basic and very relevant text of our movement, but to discussion. It certainly should not lead to general internal circulation of the "NF smear" story. The nearest to a witch-hunt we have ever had in WF flows from that incident. The victims were NW and SM, not RR!

SA and EM, admitting they weren't sure what was said, only that the NF, James Burnham, and RR were all linked through a book neither had read, should have been asked to first read the book and talk to the NC members present at the meeting, who had read the book and might have given them a clearer picture of what had and had not been said. Only if they insisted (according to right) should their letter have gone in the IB, and then only with NW and SM having the opportunity to accompany it with a reply. It is a mark of our sloppiness that things happened the way they did, with JW just putting it in the IB....

The result of the allegation of a smear on RR was to smear NW and SM - for any idea of RR as an incipient fascist (which, in their general lack of knowledge, is what SA and EM understood), would brand NW and SM as off their heads. And such stories, once in circulation, have the adhesive power of very sticky mud.

The proof is in SM's reaction! There is a story that the exonerated Dreyfus**,

** Alfred Dreyfus was a French Army officer framed-up in 1894 on charges of selling military secrets to Germany. The campaign to expose the frame-up waged by the left dominated political life in France for years.

white-haired from his years on Devils Island, on hearing discussion of some scandal or other at his officers' club, looked up from an armchair and sagely remarked, "There's no smoke without fire". SM was 'Dreyfusian' enough to wrack his brains for an explanation of how the impression of a link between RR and the NF had been created, and concluded that the only logical explanation was that NW, in her final quotation of the three cited or summarised, must have again, in passing, mentioned James Burnham's current politics. In fact, on checking with others present, he found she hadn't. So suggestive are such stories - and what about the effect on the members of the group who weren't present?

SA and EM's confusion is explained by the atmosphere and is, anyway, graphically demonstrated in the IB letter.

JS is different, however. He too alleged RR was linked to the NF. Unlike the other two comrades, JS has read 'The Struggle for a Proletarian Party', and unlike any of us he has actually worked with the surviving left-wing "orphans of James Burnham" - the IS of the USA. He has also been twelve years or more in politics. His role in this affair suggests either malice or else that he is so jaundiced as to be sick. In any event he is either to be considered unbalanced or guilty of deliberate slander.

JOHN STRAUTHER

Which brings us to cd. Strauther. The platform, for which no slight or injury to any member (or potential member) of the DCF is too small to mention, protests that SM has called JS mad. (Page 36). In an informal small group like ours, exaggerated exclamations of that sort inevitably occur. (At the March NC, for example, one of the two authors of this document referred to a proposal from the other as "mad". Since the overwhelming majority of the NC voted for it, he was, according to the severe logic of the DCF, calling the majority of the NC mad. A proposal that a faction should be formed to take revenge on him for it produced the mirth it was intended to produce.)

But since the DCF platform wants to discuss the state of JS's mind, let us do it seriously. SM does believe that the most rational explanation of the long series of weird political misinterpretations (like us 'red-baiting' the IMG) and strange perceptions unique to himself (like the 'persecution' of RR) is that, to put it gently, JS lacks a certain balance.**

It is, whatever the explanation, a fact that JS has viewed the internal affairs of the group with jaundiced eyes and has played a major part in poisoning the present situation - and specifically in poisoning RR. He has also related to the group politically more often than not as if he were a consciously hostile and malicious observer rather than a member. His role in generating the crisis of the DCF has been a major one. His state of mind aside, JS is a political type only too easy to understand. He comes from a statum of the old pre-1968 IS who found life in that circle comfortable and undemanding and life afterwards when IS tightened up uncomfortable and unrewarding, and moreover failed to find any role within the new set-up. Those of us who went through the 1968-71 IS entry could name dozens of such people, though they are all far from being John Strauthers. Strauther sympathises with all oppositions and suspects centralism - that, after all, was the politics of IS up to 1968, where he served at least six or seven years' apprenticeship.

In addition, JS's gravitation to RR is psychologically only too easy to explain. Finding no role in the new IS, joining WF, having a high esteem of himself, JS identifies with RR as one unrecognised (and persecuted) genius with another, and especially so since RR is pitted against the exponents of a centralised regime.

** Any discussion on this level, however, any attempts to fathom the Strauther phenomenon, have been strictly confined to the SC with two exceptions: SM made some reference to JS's state of mind in a telephone conversation with MT last autumn, forgetting that a comrade from the Liverpool branch was in the room. And at the January NC SM said to JS regarding his theories about the persecution of RR - either you are mad or I am.

JS never believed in a centralised regime until Tony Cliff changed his mind in 1968, and JS's experience since then has only reinforced him in the prejudices against centralism, the revolutionary party, and "leaders", which bristle in the DCF platform.

TO SUM UP - THE REAL CAMPAIGN OF DEFAMATION AND WHERE IT COMES FROM

To sum up - the couple of specific incidents cited in support of the theory of the 'persecution' of RR do not give any factual backing to that theory. In reality the systematic allegations of 'persecution' - possible only from an anti-centralist professional malcontent viewpoint - amount to a campaign of defamation against, not RR, but NW and SM, particularly SM.

This campaign of defamation is not just a product of JS's fevered imagination. Through JS's peculiar fancies are reflected hostile pressures outside the group. In the campaign to expel us from IS the IS leadership repeatedly (if vainly) tried to split off the presumably naive and well-intentioned 'rank and file' of the WF tendency from the alleged 'professional sectarian' SM. When Bas Hardy and Steve Woodling left IS in mid-1972, to join WF, Duncan Hallas, replying to them in the IS Internal Bulletin, deplored the fact that they had "sunk to the level of Matgamna". At the recent IMG conference, the minority Tendency A's document called for a general revolutionary left regroupment effort by IMG, to include WF "even if it means having Matgamna in the organisation". Some RMC comrades have now taken up the idea of SM being the bureaucratic monarch of WF.

All this is to be expected in the normal course of polemic between the groups on the left. It is unfortunate that the general view of WF in IS and the IMG, and therefore more widely on the revolutionary left, is as "the Matgamnaites"; but given our small size, we have to live with it. It is a different matter, however, when a member of our own organisation seeks to reflect and capitalise on these hostile allegations by slanderous defamations and undocumented accusations.

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===== W H E R E I S T H E D C F G O I N G ? =====

But what shall we say of the Mahruf group that changes its 'tendency' seven times in the interests of the self-preservation of the old clique and in doing this does not halt before the dirtiest methods? Judgment must be based on the fact that it is an altogether unprincipled clique, demoralised by the methods, splits and intrigues of the Comintern, which does not take ideas seriously, and with whom we must watch not their theses but their fingers. What is important is not the theses that Landau will present tomorrow, but the fact that he approves everything on China, even on America and the other countries, insofar as it does not touch his position of power. What is characteristic of Landau is not to be found in his trade union theses, but in fact that he kept up a deadly silence on the trade union question in France because Naville is his friend. The programs, the theses, the principles, are highly important when they represent a reality. However, when they are only an adornment and a mask for clique struggle, then they must be booted aside in order to uncover the gentlemen concerned and represent them in natura.
(Trotsky, Writings '30/31, p.239) **

Let us sum up our argument so far.

- 1) The DCF does not have one single clearly stated political position.
- 2) The DCF systematically conceals major political questions for the sake of combining to factionalise on secondary issues. The DCF systematically fails or refuses to draw out its arguments to their logical conclusions.
- 3) The DCF is a continuation of Bolton parochialism which has existed since 1972. This parochialism - defining itself as "Bolton" against "the centre" - has continued solid through massive changes in political line (on the Labour Party; on theory, practice, mass work and cadre-building... :only "the correct" economic perspective has remained unchanged, unaffected by events in the outside world!)
- 4) The DCF's methods of factional struggle are methods calculated to confuse and miseducate and muddy discussion.
- 5) The DCF's concept of a 'cadre organisation' is an organisation which shelters its members from the difficulties and pressures of capitalist society, which builds a little island of mutual comfort within capitalism.
- 6) The DCF repeatedly reduce socialism to the level of the relations of bourgeois egotism, decked out with (presumably) a certain amount of economic equality and an insistence on the 'dignity of labour'. Their political arguments repeatedly revert to a reformist level.
- 7) The DCF's conception of democratic centralism is implicitly hostile to any concept of a centralised regime, and to any element of compulsion. It is discussion club 'democratic centralism'. The DCF's ideas educate comrades to consider their own personal feelings, interests, and desires more important than the general class aims of revolutionary socialism. They repeatedly act as "lawyers" for the most backward, anti-revolutionary tendencies.
- 8) The DCF's ideas on women's liberation are downright reactionary.
- 9) The DCF's writings on economics show that they have not even understood the question of what an economic perspective is.
- 10) Their diagnosis of the problems of Workers Fight is extremely shallow, missing out most of the worst problems. Their proposed remedies are confused jumble.

** The Mahruf group was a Left Opposition group in Austria. Landau was a leader of the German Left Opposition who had close links with Mahruf. Naville was a leader of the French Left Opposition, where there was at the time a crisis caused by disagreements over trade union work.