

PLATFORM  
of the  
LEFT FACTION  
of the  
INTERNATIONAL  
SOCIALISTS

# INTRODUCTION

Before we outline our criticism of the group's development, it is necessary briefly to state the common ground from which we start. We agree with the characterisation of Russia as "state capitalist", and with the position which flows from it: "neither Washington nor Moscow, but International Socialism". We consider that theories of "workers' states" and "transitional societies" divorced from the proletarian revolution and dictatorship lead to the displacement of the working class as the agent of its own emancipation. Consequent upon this abandonment of the centrality of the working class, "orthodox" Trotskysim has developed a whole series of errors in its theory and practice. These, we believe, the leading theoreticians of IS have outlined in a number of works vital to the further development of Marxism. We believe that from this work flows IS's practical orientation towards the working class and IS's potential in the struggle to build a revolutionary party.

Our basic disagreement derives from the incompleteness of this development. Our view is that IS's present conception of the building of the party renders it incapable of fulfilling this vital task which is a real possibility in the coming period - one of enormous opportunities for the revolutionary left.

We see massive struggles of the class at a time of sharpening capitalist crisis. Increasingly these struggles pose problems to which the IS group is best placed to offer a political answer and a practical lead. In a period when the nature and role of the trade-union leadership, the reformist and the Stalinist organisations, is called into question in growing struggles of wider and wider sections of the class, IS is faced with enormous responsibilities.

We consider that the organisation has developed no sense of direction in the face of these possibilities. This has immediate symptoms but more profound roots. Where then do we point to this crisis of direction in the group?

Let us look first at our industrial work - which will be dealt with more fully later. This year has seen no fundamental strengthening of the work of our TU fractions. It has seen the scrapping of our annual industrial conference. Instead, our industrial self-estimation has depended on the behind-the-scenes credibility gained from our work for the Fine Tubes conference, on our ability promptly to print leaflets for the docks dispute (witness cde Higgins' Interim Political Report), and on news, conveyed through the full-time grapevine, of a successful factory group that is operating up the road or over the hill. These allegations are serious and the reasons for the leadership's increasingly unsystematic approach to the problems of building the party will be outlined in our platform.

The quietly decessed Autumn/Winter campaign, a creation which produced more efforts in redefinition and justification than it did meaningful growth for the organisation, needs to be seen in the same light. If the campaign was born with various definitions, ranging from the grandiose (remember the Campaign Committees in the localities, linking up for a National Rally) to the apologetic (NC members were later to explain that the campaign was just a meeting in each area) - it lived its life with no more coherence or self-purpose. The leadership provided no direction, with an assortment of jumbled slogans and large numbers of leaflets, of little or no political content, distributed widely announcing IS membership to be the cure for such social ills as unemployment and low pay. The meeting having been held, the posters having been stuck up, the campaign slid gently into the past. Its results and lessons have never been discussed or presented by the leadership. For

us the campaign stands as a monument to the failure of the leadership seriously to develop and argue for a political strategy for the organisation in the present period.

But the campaign and our industrial work are not alone in their random approach. The question of the Ugandan Asians and the subsequent refurbishing of the arsenal of British racism were responded to admirably by our organisation. The two Leicester demonstrations stand witness to this. However, to many eyes such sudden mobilisation served to underline IS's previously inconsistent attitude towards the fight against racism. When it reared its head in the labour movement we moved, but we had developed no consistent work in combatting this ever-present obstacle to revolutionary ideas in the class. Likewise, our attitude to Irish work. Gde Harman has effectively sounded the death knell of IS work within the anti-internment league, and the last year has seen a declining involvement on the part of IS in AIL demonstrations. This deliberately unsystematic approach is now (at the time of writing) to be added to by a massive IS turn-out on an AIL demonstration at the end of January, 1973. By such shows of strength IS sometimes impresses itself as to its own seriousness, but fails to develop in a responsible manner this crucial area of work.

How then is the group held together in its present crisis of direction? Increasingly by the network of national organisers - what we would call an organisational solution to a basically political problem. In face of the crisis we describe, the leadership's response is to strengthen the contact between the centre itself and particular areas of local and national activity. The idea of factory branches is a perfect example of this method.

We consider the answer to lie in a different direction - not in the perfection of administrative communication, but in the building of a self-conscious democratic-centralist organisation. There are no administrative short cuts to this goal and our platform argues for the changes needed in the group's practice if the goal is to be achieved.

This document attempts to pinpoint the politics and the practice of the group which lead to its failure to respond adequately to the demands of the situation. Practice, moreover, which the leadership hopes to enshrine with acceptance of its Draft Programme. We seek to show how our politics have been abandoned for more short-cut methods of building an organisation. The group may grow if its present direction is maintained, but this growth will not be revolutionary. We stand in danger of squandering the real possibility of developing a revolutionary leadership in the working class.

It is with the express aim of combatting these tendencies that we have come forward to build a Left Faction in IS.

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# THE REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

The revolutionary party is distinguished from all other working-class organisations by its commitment to bringing to the fore in and through every partial struggle the question of the emancipation of the working class, and by its internationalism. While this means that a revolutionary party represents the working class in the most complete fashion politically, it is simultaneously true that this is precisely what makes it a vanguard, a selected minority of the class. Because it has to be the most advanced and resolute in action, because it has to understand theoretically the line of march, the conditions and the methods of struggle, it requires the maximum of understanding and discipline in its members. The party has thus to be a vanguard, its members have to be cadres.

But this must be accompanied by the recognition of the importance of the spontaneous mass struggles of the working class and of other oppressed social groups, nationalities, etc. Active participation in these struggles is what distinguishes a real vanguard party from a sect. The party and its members participate in every struggle in order to help raise the "spontaneous" partial or sectional militancy into a total class view - into the outlook of the party. In this sense, socialist consciousness is developed by the party, and to this extent enters the class "from outside".

Such a party cannot be built in all circumstances - during a long period of capitalist boom, with a desultory economic struggle rather than class actions of any magnitude, a small group calling itself the vanguard party will become a sect, increasingly living in a world of illusions.

But in a situation where the battles of the class are increasing in magnitude, when the ruling class poses a sharp political challenge, an organisation which simply "interprets" workers' spontaneous responses to this attack in political terms is failing in its prime duty. IS tends more and more to give a political, class gloss to the present level of consciousness. To describe the dockers' actions as "direct political anti-government action striking right at the sham of parliamentary rule" (Interim Political Report) is to pass from an objective description of the nature of the struggle to a wildly inaccurate description of the understanding of many of the most advanced militants. And optimism about this spontaneous political development leads to a failure to take up the very work that only revolutionaries can perform. It is up to us to explain "the sham of parliamentary rule". As a matter of fact, even the sham of the Jones-Aldington report was not exposed. Such statements as "the 1972 example of the miners will not be lost on the power workers" (IPR) show the danger of over-estimating the spontaneity with which workers draw lessons, and of under-estimating the task facing us.

Because militancy alone does not lead to the abandonment of reformist consciousness, particularly when this is as historically deep-rooted as that of the working class in Britain, we cannot talk of simply incorporating into the ranks of the party all active participants in these struggles.

Such a party would imagine itself to have penetrated different sections of the class. But, unless it had won their political allegiance, unless it had completely overcome their sectional consciousness, their prior

loyalty to their union or their industry, such groups of workers would represent interest groups within the party. Our industrial fraction would not be revolutionaries working in, say, the AUEW, but an AUEW lobby within the party. The party would become a confused tangle of conflicting interests, and would be forced into compromises between them, increasingly immobile in its industrial policy. This would obscure the party's representation of the interests of the class as a whole and of the class internationally. For example, the immediate economic interests of a group of workers might coincide with those of imperialism (the Icelandic cod-war), and, unless the party's members in such an industry were political cadres first and foremost, this might lead to a serious distortion of the politics of the organisation.

Only a group with a clear understanding of its own politics, its own programme, can clearly estimate the activity of broad layers of the class as a whole. The importance of the mass organisations of the class (trades unions now - soviets in a revolutionary situation), and the necessity of working within them, to win them to revolutionary politics, can be meaningful only if the party is seen as a political vanguard. This, of course, does not mean that the party is a tiny sect. To lead the working class to power in an advanced country, the party would, in reality, need hundreds of thousands of members. But it would not be a mass party - the party would not be identified with the class as a whole.

An "all-inclusive" view of membership leads to a failure to appreciate the importance of non-party rank-and-file organisations, their separateness and autonomy. At the same time, it leads to a failure to see them as an arena of struggle for socialist politics, and rests content with tying them to the party organisationally.

These are in many ways problems of the future, but, if we are seriously "building the party", then there are already in IS the seeds of the wrong approach on all these points. We believe that this is the time to recruit, but IS has recruited in a way that discourages the political development of the "recruits". The task, one of extreme urgency, is to create a large and highly developed cadre in the working class.

We do not believe that we or anyone else has a blueprint for the party, or that a tradition holds the key to this question. Leninism, like Marxism, is not a collection of dogmas, but, as an interaction of theory and practice, a method which revolutionaries have to learn to use afresh in new circumstances. IS believes that the building of a revolutionary party is on the order of the day, yet the leadership has not really faced up to the political problems this poses. Obviously Duncan Hallett thinks they are solved by declaring our adherence to "the communist tradition" and by educating the membership in what has happened from 1847 to the present day. But to create a party from an agitational group such as IS is a tremendous qualitative task - pre-eminently a political one. This task cannot be undertaken simply by educating cadres in a tradition, but only by developing them in the use of the Leninist method. To the leadership, however, the change is firstly quantitative, organisational. Numbers are, of course, far from unimportant, penetration of all sections of advanced workers is absolutely vital, but simultaneous to this growth must occur a tremendous change in the consciousness and capabilities of the members - all members. The group must develop a coherent political strategy, a programme, and must change its organisation into a really democratic centralist one.

The leadership has not as yet taken the question of the party seriously. It seems to present no theoretical problems to them and thus a whole series of practical issues are in the utmost confusion within the group. Cdes Cliff and Hallett are quite happy with the formulation that "we

developed our theory when we were a propoganda circle - now we have to put it into practice". Or, as Nigel Harris said, "we have enough architects - now we want builders".

We believe that theoretical and practical tasks have to keep pace with one another. The attempt by the leadership to transform the group into the revolutionary party without seriously opening any debate and without involving the membership in such debate will, we believe, put at risk the whole development of IS to date. The gap is getting wider between the tasks which the developing class struggle places before IS and the ad hoc responses of the leadership. Thus, recognising the central task of our period as the creation of a vanguard party of the class on a new political programme, we proceed to examine what we consider are the fundamental points on which IS is unprepared for this task.

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# INTERNATIONALISM

Internationalism is the recognition, embodied in the programme, that the proletarian revolution is by no means the result of the forces operating in a single country. Without an internationalist understanding, the Bolsheviks would, like the Mensheviks, have held in 1917 that the time was not ripe for socialism.

Only for the internationalist is the class struggle always the struggle for socialism. For the social-democrat and the Stalinist there are always more immediate tasks: "achieving civil rights", "defending democracy", "preserving peace". Their point of departure is what they see as the interest of their "national" working class - their "socialism" is truly "socialism in one country". For this reason, although starting off as partisans of the British working class, they end up championing the British parliament, the British constitution, and, finally, British capitalism. But the consistent internationalism of the Bolsheviks and, later, the Trotskyists, embodied in the theory of Permanent Revolution, enabled them to survive the waves of chauvinism which swept the working class in two imperialist world-wars. And unless socialist internationalism has practical meaning and imbues the work of our class then we will not build a revolutionary combat party which will stand firm in a time of crisis.

We need to have a really international programme on which to build the party. IS's incorrect notion of internationalism reflects and reinforces its mistaken theory of the party.

Duncan Hallee, in "Party and Class", argues that it is necessary to start by linking the concrete struggles of workers in one country with those of others. True, we need international rank-and-file links, but these are not the International in embryo.

A rank-and-file movement in one country can provide the basis for the revolutionary party only if there is active within it a political grouping with a clear strategy for doing just that. And this is all the more true of the International. To talk of "putting aside grandiose ideas of 'International leadership', 'World Congresses' and the like, in favour of the humdrum tasks of propoganda and agitation ..." (from the same passage) is not at base either modesty or realism. It is a complacent and politically frivolous abandonment of the task of building an international. Lenin did not take up the fight for a new international because there was already "a real current of internationalism". He took

it up in the face of the great wave of chauvinism which engulfed and overturned the Second International. Of course, the International cannot come into "real" existence until there is "a real current of internationalism", but this current cannot arise without the political lead of revolutionaries internationally. Unless we take seriously the urgent need to begin the political fight for the International, all the realism, all the international rank-and-file trade-union links, will still leave another generation of working-class militants vulnerable to chauvinism in the face of a deepening capitalist crisis.

Despite the claim made in the Statement of Basic Principles, that the struggle to build a party is only part of the wider struggle to create a revolutionary socialist international, there is no serious debate with other organisations. Instead, our international reports speak vaguely of other groups' orientation to the working class. But this in itself is not a sufficient definition - in organisational terms, it applies to many Stalinist parties. Any serious international work must be based upon political debate with the parties and groups of the revolutionary left.

This lack of a serious approach to internationalism can be seen also in the organisation's failure to relate its theoretical positions to its international reporting. State capitalist and other pretensions to socialism are amply dismissed in a succession of anecdotes. We fail to raise our theory to the level of propaganda and agitation. Suicide rates, prod deals, banquet receptions, provide a stream of dismissive snippets in SW. A serious analysis of developments in these countries is seldom provided on the pages of our paper.

Likewise, the writings of Nigel Harris provide IS with the best theoretical position for an understanding of the Third World and the Peasantry. This enables us to take up the question of the Permanent Revolution perfectly clearly - that in these countries the proletariat, in alliance with, and leading, the peasantry, can make the socialist revolution. And we are not blind to the possibility of partial advance against imperialism in the Third World (eg China) under the leadership of the petty-bourgeoisie. But, in practice, SW gives the impression of writing-off all movements in the Third World. It leads many comrades to assume the position - effectively held by the Mensheviks - that only in the advanced countries can the workers seize power.

The following sections - on Ireland, the Common Market, and Racism - describe particular failures of IS to proceed from an internationalist position

## Ireland

This is the area in which our practice has been most acutely tested in the face of British chauvinism, and internationalism most notably shelved. Irish work should be undertaken not, as the leadership imagines, primarily for the purpose of recruiting Irish men and women, but because the struggle in Ireland brings to the fore in the British working class many of the prejudices which stand in the way of the development of socialist consciousness. Our task was not only to maintain the theoretically correct position of "unconditional but critical support", but also to agitate in the ranks of the most advanced workers around a clearly defeatist slogan.

But, instead, the major virtue of IS - our orientation to the working class - has been transformed into a vice. We have correctly stressed that the struggle against imperialism can only be won under the leader-

ship of the proletariat and in the class goal of a Workers' Republic. We have, therefore, correctly emphasised the need to build an independent revolutionary socialist party. To introduce these principles, however, as tactical alternatives to a supposedly bankrupt and reactionary "petty-bourgeois republicanism", to counterpose the socialist and national struggles, is to adopt a thoroughly false and dangerous position.

As a result, the leadership of IS has no option but grossly to mis-educate the membership and our periphery - for example, on the so-called "individual terrorism" of the IRA. Bourgeois notions of "law and order" go unchallenged. Bombings and assassinations are seen as alternatives to mass action, they are not evaluated in Marxist terms of their relation or non-relation to such action. Then, when ede Hallas refers to Trotsky's criticisms of terrorism, he must deny that there is a war being fought in Ireland. For Trotsky stated, in the same passage, that these criticisms did not hold in conditions of civil war. Likewise, the allegedly "bankrupt" republican forces posed a problem in bringing about the abolition of Stormont. SW had demanded this, but a reassessment of our attitude to the republican movement was avoided with a breath-taking about-turn. The overthrow of Stormont became a "defeat" which simply "rationalised" imperialist rule.

But this state of affairs has not been reached simply as a result of the pressure of British chauvinism. The division of the working class in the North has for IS obscured the national question, and thus the need to agitate around the slogan - "Support the IRA against British Imperialism". This emphasis on working-class division is an adaptation to a purely "trade-union" outlook - leading to the illusion that militancy in the economic struggle could unite Protestant and Catholic first, and that only then could the struggle against imperialism go forward. The only real basis for unity is of course the development of consciousness of imperialist exploitation by Protestant and Catholic alike. The socialist and national struggles are not in reality opposed.

## *the common market*

The key task of the organisation at the time of the Common Market debate was to oppose the development of the wave of anti-European chauvinism within all sections of the labour movement. But IS did not adopt an agitational position to combat this wave. True, the organisation adopted the formally correct slogans:

1. Against the Common Market
2. Against Daily Express chauvinism
3. For the Socialist United States of Europe.

But this position, one of revolutionary internationalism, was, in practice, diluted down to what was thought possible to argue within the working class. Our opposition to the Common Market did not go hand-in-hand with opposition to British chauvinism. In our votes in TU branches, etc, our opposition to the Common Market was allowed to exist separate from our other two slogans. We insist that our vote could have been given against the Common Market only on the basis of opposition also to British chauvinism. The leadership of IS maintained that a stand on all three points would split the "left" and thus concede victory to the right. But we should have argued that the responsibility for any vote lost to the right lay precisely with the CP and Labour "Lefts" in their refusal to break with British chauvinism. We should have been abstentionist on the alternatives of little-Englandism and the Europe of the Monopolies.



# RACISM

The problem of racism is that of the dominance of imperialist ideas in the working class. IS has correctly and relatively consistently exposed the lies of the racists, eg by stating the facts that more people leave the country than enter it, and that the social system, not immigrants, is to blame for appalling housing conditions and unemployment. These facts are brought to the fore by the organisation whenever fascism rears its ugly head. This is not, however, grasping the racist bull by its horns, but by its tail. Nor is the task of fighting racism merely one of uniting black and white in factory struggle. The problem of the Ugandan Asians was a real divide between black and white involved shoulder-to-shoulder in the militant struggle of the building workers' strike. IS is quite right to see the factory floor as the basic arena in which to tackle racism. But this can be done only by consistent work to expose and combat the fundamental assumptions of large sections of the working class, and by agitating for active support from white workers for all forms of immigrant self-defence against harassment and exploitation. Only on the basis of this consistent work can be forged an anti-racist presence within the leading elements of the working class.

We consider that IS has not taken this work seriously in the past. Its response to particular events has been a committed one (eg the Leicester demonstrations), but its work has been dominated by these particular events which seemed to threaten a rapid growth of fascism, rather than by a commitment to the fundamental task of combatting an ever-present racism in the British working class.

## CONCLUSION

In its failure to adopt and fight for an internationalist programme, and its unwillingness to confront the obstacle of British chauvinism, IS is not building an internationalist cadre within the working class. In a period of social crisis, of which Aldershot gave us the faintest whiff, this presents an insuperable barrier to the building of the revolutionary party.

# REFORMISM

A central obstacle to the building of a revolutionary party in the next period is the hold which reformist ideas have not only upon the mass of the class but also upon the vanguard. The "long boom" after the war, and the ensuing experience of a politically impoverished economic struggle, have nurtured this consciousness in the working class. Even to begin to win the whole of the class to revolutionary socialist politics, we have first to concentrate all our energies on the vanguard. This crucial stratum can be won only through a fighting Marxist programme. Such a perspective requires that we locate the key areas where we can contact the vanguard and demonstrate, in practice, the superiority of revolutionary politics and the bankruptcy of reformist ideas.

IS has correctly characterised the TU bureaucracy as a caste balancing between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. The problem of the bureaucracy is, thus, not simply its higher wages, its inability to be recalled, or its whisky-chats with Heath. The basic problem is the reformist world-view which flows from its balancing position. As a result of this, it will always betray in time of crisis. Our propaganda must, therefore, analyse the reformism of the TU bureaucracy - and of its

relation with the Labour Party. Our agitational demands for rank-and-file control of the unions must be seen to flow from this analysis.

At times of mass action, the TU leaders can be pushed forward (though in the last analysis they will always vacillate). But this pressure from the class is filtered through the bureaucracy into the Labour Party - note the role of the Scanlon-Jones block-vote in the "left shift" of the last Labour conference. And this relationship between the class and the LP is further mediated by the Parliamentary LP, with the result that the LP never simply reflects a movement in the class. While the LP plays a key ideological role in the maintenance of capitalism, its hold breaks at times of the self-activity of the working class. So it is at these points that we as revolutionaries must seek to draw out the political lessons of reformism. Struggles like the docks dispute and the rents battle, where large advanced sections of the class do not look to the LP for a lead, are examples of this.

Our criticism of IS is that it does not tackle this problem adequately. Our tasks must be to:

1. Put forward concrete programmes of action which can lead the class to particular victories without recourse to the LP. We most clearly disagree with those critics of IS who argue that we should draw the reformists into the centre of the struggle in order to discredit them. This sows unnecessary illusions in the LP.
2. Fight with the class for particular reforms, eg for higher pensions or against welfare cuts.
3. Place central to our agitational and propagandist work those demands which serve as bridges between the day-to-day struggle and socialist ideas. Demands which both politically and organisationally carry the class forward to revolutionary ideas. These demands must flow from our programme, eg work or full pay, no incomes policy under capitalism, full independence of the TUs from the state, councils of action to fight the Industrial Relations Act.
4. Consistent propaganda work on the experience of the last Labour government, with a view to exposing the political assumptions of reformism - the mixed economy, the neutrality of the state, etc.

We agree with comrade Hallas that we fight for both reformist and transitional demands. But we do not do so in the form of the six demands which IS puts forward as conditions to be placed by the TUs on the next Labour government:

1. Unconditional repeal of anti-union laws.
2. Restoration of all welfare cuts - no charges, no selectivity.
3. An end to unemployment - work or full pay.
4. No incomes policy under capitalism.
5. Repeal of all racist legislation.
6. Renationalisation, without compensation, of all sectors of industry returned to private hands.

(IS Journal 48)

This jumble of reformist (eg 6) and transitional (eg 3) demands, directed at the LP, will do no more than serve to raise and sustain illusions in the LP. Only a large workers' revolutionary party, committed to revolutionary politics, can hold the LP to account for a programme of demands in the eyes of the class. The task of building such an organisation necessitates a clear programme of demands which bridges the gap between the day-to-day struggle and conscious socialist ideas. These are the demands which must act as the centre of our agitation to expose the political rottenness of reformism, and these are demands to which we do not seek to commit the LP.

IS's idea of using reformist demands to expose reformism is based on

the notion that since systematic reforms are no longer possible under capitalism, then "the struggle for reforms is transformed into a revolutionary struggle" (ISJ 52). But, firstly, though we accept the impossibility of systematic reforms at the present time, this does not rule out temporary concessions on the part of capitalism as an alternative to revolutionary crisis. Secondly, such a crisis depends on the ideas which predominate within the working class. For instance, the German working class of the 30s did not break with reformism even though capitalism was incapable of reforms. It failed because no revolutionary party existed to develop a strategy to overcome reformism. British workers will fail likewise unless revolutionaries live up to this historic task.

### THE COMMUNIST PARTY

The social-democratic theory and practice of the CP derives from the political imperatives of "socialism in one country". The victory of Stalinism in Russia distorted the politics of the young CP into a defence of the Russian "national interest", both in words and in a political practice which subordinated the interest of the working class to a policy of "not rocking the boat". But, because of its revolutionary rhetoric, Stalinism represents the biggest barrier to building a revolutionary party both internationally and in Britain. Hence a key task for IS is to win the membership of the CP to revolutionary socialism.

IS must attack the social-democratic illusions and their Stalinist base, in propaganda and debate. Such work must raise not only the TU struggle, but also the international and historical record of Stalinism. At the same time, IS should, at all levels, issue calls for united-front work on specific questions. Such calls must be issued at all levels when the struggle is sufficiently serious that the rank and file of the CP will see the folly of split ranks. If their leadership rejects our call, we can thus demonstrate their "unseriousness" - if they accept, then our cdes through contact with their rank and file can demonstrate the superiority of our politics in practice. Such approaches must, however, be based upon a clear political understanding of what we are doing, where the weakness of the CP lies, and must be vigorously principled.

### CONCLUSION

Reformism has deep and historic roots in the British working class. We cannot hope to fight it by relying on the impending crisis to change reformist ideas into revolutionary. Nor do we need merely to point to its noticeable organisational decay. Only the consistent fight against reformist politics wherever they are posed, and a clear struggle for demands which consciously challenge the laws of capitalism and reformism, only this can equip us in the fight. We do not consider that our present tactics offer us a real strategy to fight reformism.

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# DEMOCRATIC CENTRAL<sup>m</sup>

The need for a centralised party should not be posed, as it is by IS, simply in terms of the need to reply in kind to the centralised forces of the capitalist state. The revolutionary party embodies the highest class-consciousness. It attempts to recruit advanced militants in order to become the real leadership of the working class. It formulates the scientific strategy on the basis of which its members undertake their

activity - and its inner life and organisation exist to these ends. The politics are centralised - from the experience and debate of the members through the branches and other structures to the national conference and NC - from the debate and decisions of the conference and NC through the various structures to the members. The centralism, the subordination of the lower organs to the higher, serves a political purpose. Decisions seriously arrived-at must be strictly implemented to prove in practice their correctness or error. Such discipline needs a seriousness about political decisions, and, to be effective, needs also the promotion of debate among the membership.

But IS is developing a caricature of democratic centralism. The higher organs are increasingly closed to the lower. The members of the NC seem increasingly bound by a cabinet-type responsibility with their disagreements not taken to the membership. For example, at the last conference, NC members were not allowed to speak against policy statements of the NC as a whole. Of course, this unheard-of procedure merely aggravated the situation where any criticism of group policy is seen as a threat. The members and local structures come to stand as isolated units - as against the "centre", a monolithic bloc of the administration and the group's leading committees.

Obviously, no organisation could long hold together in these circumstances. The necessity of increasing numbers of full-timers - genuine in an expanding organisation - is exaggerated and distorted by the need for a command structure. And the conversion of the industrial conference into a rally one year, with its abandonment the next, contributes further to the atomisation of the membership - as would the proposed institution of factory branches.

SW likewise does not act as the paper of a democratic centralist organisation. It should reflect and itself encourage political debate within the group (eg with NC and EC statements, and dissenting views). SW should, with the bulletin and the journal, help prepare for the national and industrial conferences. They should report, as fully as security permits, on the debates and decisions, and should help to implement these decisions.

But democratic centralism demands primarily a cadre organisation. Our first aim must be to fight for our politics in and through every struggle - and this is not "commentating from the sidelines". The more direct our role, the better must our members be able to argue politically. Recruitment must, therefore, be on a political basis - an understanding of our programme, and the ability to play an active part in fighting for it. Contacts must work regularly, and be involved in political discussion, with the group, before membership. We oppose the "sign them up and educate them later" approach which has characterised the rallies of the "Fight the Tories" campaign and its precursor.

To create and maintain a cadre membership requires, however, a good deal more than a clearer idea of recruitment. It also requires more than an elaborate educational scheme, more than cadre and advanced cadre schools. Democratic centralist organisation itself brings together political training and practical activity. But to do this it is necessary to give priority to the building of a regional, and where possible a district, structure. There should be regular aggregates where the group's politics and both local and national decisions should be discussed. And these aggregates must be able to submit resolutions to the national conference and NC. The regions and districts should have elected committees responsible to conference and the NC for the work of their branches, and full-timers and NC members should be subject to the discipline of these committees, unless they have instructions to the contrary from the national organisation.

Finally, our industrial and TU fractions must be consciously strengthened. They should hold regular aggregates, and an annual industrial conference, not a rally, must be able to debate motions from our TU cdes, as well as from the Industrial sub-committee. This conference and the fraction aggregates, like the area aggregates, must be able to submit resolutions to the national conference and NC - and as much of this internal life as security permits must be visible to our periphery, to the militants grouped around the rank-and-file papers, and to the readers of SW.

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## THE PROGRAMME

Duncan Hallas has said that "the fundamental basis of the party is revolutionary theory, the revolutionary programme, the living tradition of the communist movement" (Draft Programme). We agree, fundamentally, with this position. It is precisely, however, because we consider the practice of IS with regard to building the party not to be based on this principle that we find ourselves in opposition. It is because of this that we consider neither cde Hallas nor cde Jeffreys has prepared a draft for an intervening revolutionary programme for IS.

The building of a revolutionary party is the active struggle by revolutionaries to build themselves as the leadership of the class on the basis of their political programme. In the past, IS has developed many of the elements of a revolutionary programme: the recognition in the theory of State Capitalism of the inter-imperialist rivalry between Russia and the USA, the stabilising effect of the Permanent Arms Economy of post-war capitalism, the key reformist role of the TU bureaucracy in this period. But IS has been unable so far to use these invaluable theoretical gains, and the practice which has flowed from them, to produce a programme. In fact, IS has never previously taken seriously the task of producing a programme.

What then does a programme seek to do? It is not as some cdes consider a statement of IS policy decisions, an enlarged "Where we stand". Nor is it an abstract series of re-written formulations handed down to us by the great figures of scientific socialism, a "Meaning of Marxism" mark 2. We consider Duncan Hallas' draft in the November '72 Internal Bulletin to present an uneasy alliance of these two fundamentally incorrect conceptions of the nature of a programme.

A revolutionary programme sets out first to understand the present world, its dynamics, contradictions, and instabilities. It does this, not from the point of view of radical commentary or scholastic interest, but from the starting-point of the barriers presented to the building of a revolutionary leadership in the international working class. The demands raised by the programme are not "issues of the day" (cde Hallas' synopsis) as generated by the spontaneous struggle. They flow from the location within world capitalism of the obstacles presented to a world revolutionary leadership in the class, and proceed to pose demands which open the way for the transcending of these obstacles by the vanguard of the class.

As Trotsky said, "the proletarian vanguard needs not a catalogue of truisms but a manual of action". "A manual of action" which locates the principal strengths and weaknesses of the class and puts forward the demands to overcome these weaknesses. A programme's demands in the current

epoch must flow from the contradictions of the world economy to the demands to overcome the barriers before the class.

What does this mean in practice, and how does cde Hallas' draft prove totally inadequate? It is our intention to produce an alternative programme. Here we will illustrate the short-comings of cde Hallas' draft and suggest the bones of the alternative.

Let us take first the section by Hallas on capitalism to prove the incorrectness of his method. Capitalism is not analysed from the point of view of its present contradictions and crisis on a world scale. The contradictions of the pre-war world economy were the starting-point of Trotsky's transitional programme - without this analysis, the demands raised were meaningless. Contrary to current "Trotskyist" fashion, the analysis and demands were not a collection to fit all occasions. The development of capitalism has superseded the position of Trotsky. Our task is to develop a new programmatic analysis for a revolutionary party in our era. But, instead, cde Hallas treats us to his version of the basic laws of capitalism, surplus value, competitive accumulation, inherent instability. The key problems facing the international working class - for instance, the increasingly international nature of capital-competition, and the development of Japanese and Common Market capital in competition with US and Russian capital - these are ignored by his draft.

The analysis of State Capitalism must be viewed as inadequate from the same angle. The developing contradictions of State Capitalism, its inability to solve its most basic problems, are not discussed. The draft fails to raise the problem of differences within the bureaucracy of each society, and between the various regimes, and of the anti-bureaucratic blocs and forces which have emerged in periods of social and economic crisis. Therefore, the key questions posed to the revolutionary movement by the Polish workers in 1971, the Hungarian workers in 1956, and the acute crisis within the Chinese bureaucratic state - these are not discussed. But only on the basis of an analysis of these forces could be developed the programme for a revolutionary party independent of all shades of Stalinism on an international scale.

From such an analysis would emerge the principle barriers to the building of revolutionary leadership. This is of crucial importance when we come to the question of IS's role in the building of a new international. The barriers are most principally: national divisions and chauvinism, the unresolved national questions, reformism, and Stalinism.

The demands a programme seeks to raise are not a catalogue of the party's fighting interests. Rather, having located the principal obstacles to the building of a revolutionary party in our period, the demands it raises are those which would lead, in the consciousness and organisation of the class, to the overcoming of these barriers. They are not "the policy decisions on various questions that we have adopted over the last period" (Duncan Hallas). They hold the key to the party's leadership within the class. In their ability to transcend the obstacles to a revolutionary leadership within the class, these demands hold the key to the transition to a rounded socialist consciousness on the part of working-class militants.

It is because Duncan Hallas mistakes both the tasks of analysis and the nature of programmatic demands that we have a two-tier model of a programme presented by him. Tier one retells the Marxist method and its basic premises. Tier two raises the issues around which we are fighting most immediately. Only the method we have outlined offers us the way forward out of this split. Hallas' first part does not analyse the world system with regard to its dynamics and contradictions - it is

characterised rather, as Lenin said of Plekhanov's similar draft, by "extreme abstractness of many of the formulations, so that they might seem intended for a series of lectures rather than for a militant party". The second part of the draft fails to connect with the first, merely repeating our most-used agitational demands. The resultant product is a hybrid of an educational document and a list of demands. It is not a revolutionary programme.

## PROPAGANDA AND AGITATION

The IS position on building the party leads to incorrect positions throughout the practice of our organisation. This is most apparent in our propaganda and agitation. Because the work of building the party is not seen as a clear political task, because the elements of the party are supposed already to exist in the working class, so our agitation tends to adapt to and tail the struggle rather than to relate to it and give a lead.

IS sees agitation as a call to action now, and propaganda as something which will relate only to future struggles. In fact, both propaganda and agitation involve calls to action. The distinction is between the scale of ideas presented and the nature of the audience they are aimed at. As Plekhanov said, agitation is the direction of a few ideas to many, and propaganda is the direction of many ideas to a few. The crucial thing here is that the ideas involved are not different ones. In fact, our agitational demands should flow logically from our propaganda which, in turn, is based on an objective, Marxist analysis of the situation.

One result of this is that in SW the demands we present tend to chop and change from week to week. Instead of a consistent programme for the working class at the present time, we get a new collection of slogans every time a new phase of the struggle flares up. Of course, to a certain degree, this is inevitable - but certain programmatic demands should be fought for consistently. For example, IS considers that the building of councils of action, to fight a whole range of anti-working-class offensives, is a vital step if the class struggle is to be brought forward. But one would hardly think this was so by reading SW. The slogan, "Build Councils of Action", appears and disappears from our paper in a bewildering, erratic way - not only in the months between key struggles, but even from week to week during such struggles.

Another result is that, because the leadership sees calls to action as the only basis of its agitation, it fails to recognise the political nature of agitational work. This means that all too often IS merely reflects the present level of militancy, rather than raising the politics which can lead to a socialist consciousness.

We wish to use the example of the recent dockers' strike to illustrate our case. IS has prided itself on the role that SW specials played in spreading the strike, and in putting the dockers' case across. We in no way oppose the work that IS did in this direction. But we do say that this was not enough. Of course, it was correct to expose the corruption

of the class. Of course we must always work to equip the class in the struggles it faces. But we must recognise the fact that SW ignored the major political issues posed by the strike and in that way failed to fight for our Marxist ideas in the vanguard of the class.

The strike posed the question of the class nature of the state and the law. It met a barrage of bourgeois propaganda concerning the rule of law. The IS leadership has claimed that the dockers' strike represented "a direct, conscious and political challenge" to the government (Interim Political Report), and that since the dockers were in fact breaking the law then our Marxist explanations of the state were irrelevant. For this reason, it is claimed, SW devoted itself first and foremost to the task of spreading the strike. What this fails to understand is that the docks militants, including those interviewed by SW, were convinced that they were not against "the law" - only "bad law". Here IS missed an opportunity to raise the politics which actions of sections of the class had presented: that is the class nature of parliamentary rule, the state and the law. We maintain that such political ideas were just as necessary to workers as calls to support the five imprisoned dockers. Indeed, in struggles to come, the presence or absence of such political awareness will be decisive.

The docks dispute is a classic example of the failure of IS to raise the politics posed by the day-to-day struggles of workers. Instead our organisation so often tails behind them. IS failed to raise the slogan, "General Strike to Smash the Act" - instead we got the call for "generalised industrial action" to "free the five". This approach contained a dual error. Firstly, it did not raise, as a central question, the generalisation of the struggle to one against the Industrial Relations Act. It stuck at the issue of the jailings. Secondly, it told militants to do what they were already doing - ie "generalised industrial action". This slogan, unlike that of general strike, was not one around which the central political issues could be raised.

The failure to answer bourgeois propaganda about "the rule of law" began here. The slogans, "General Strike to Smash the Act" and "Build Councils of Action", were the key to advancing the struggle politically and organisationally. These slogans answered a concrete problem of the working class. They could be taken up and argued for by militants throughout industry. Furthermore, they steered the struggle onto a track which would have led to a sharpening of conflict between workers and the state. At the same time, these slogans could act as vehicles on which our political ideas could enter the vanguard and hence the mass of workers. They logically bridge the gap between our general theory and the struggles of the class. The abstract notion of the class state could have been made concrete and relevant. The superiority of our politics in theory and practice could have been made apparent to thousands of militants.

Instead, IS kept its politics out of the agitational slogans which were simply reflections of what was happening. Our basic political theory found no role as a "guide to action" in the formulation of our slogans. Such a disastrous approach is inevitable, given the incorrect and economistic notions of propaganda and agitation with which the leadership operates.



# SOCIALIST WORKER

The false distinction between the unpolitical "calls to action" concept of agitation and the abstract notion of propaganda as directed to the future fundamentally affects the character of SW. As a result, the "political section" of the paper and the industrial reporting remain unconnected. Politics and economic struggle are seen to occupy two very separate domains - no bridge between the two is built. For example, in Laurie Flynn's article on the "cod war" (SW 296), there was a glaring absence of the demands to be raised by trade unionists - demands which should have flowed from our political position.

Because of this gap, politics in SW take on an abstract quality. The ideas presented, for instance, in "Out of your mind", seem to find little reflection in the way the living struggles of the class are presented, or in the slogans we raise in relation to them. At other times, politics find their way into SW as sensational exposures, or disguised as articles on Labour History. The key task of linking our socialist ideas to the day-to-day struggle in an attempt to lead workers forward - this is ducked.

SW, as a result, is failing to give a lead to militants in struggle, failing to give clear guide-lines which will both advance the struggle, and raise the political consciousness of the vanguard. Let us look, for example, at the paper's recent coverage of the Incomes Policy and inflation. SW has either ducked the politics or called for simple industrial militancy (eg the classic "Use your muscle for more pay"). In SW 297, the week after the wage freeze was announced, the demand was raised: "Recall TUC to demand all-out action to smash the freeze". The paper failed to specify a general strike as the only "all-out action to smash the freeze", it failed to raise the call for councils of action to mobilise the rank and file.

What has, however, characterised SW is mindless "Tory-bashing" - potentially disastrous at a time of increasing militancy to which the LP is seen as irrelevant. The state is reduced to little more than a part of the Conservative Party machine, and the trend reaches its most absurd in the paper's coverage of Ireland. The problem of combatting British chauvinism has been overcome with the invention of the concept of "British Toryism" ("mindless" that Wilson sent the troops in).

And another disturbing tendency is the increasing attention which the paper gives to exposures of corruption - leading, in the absence of a Marxist analysis, only to reformist conclusions. A clear danger of the growing stress on greed and corruption is to mis-educate the members and sympathisers of IS, by dealing not with the causes but with the effects of the system. A Marxist paper should understand, and should lead others to understand, that even were Maudling a man of integrity the system he upholds would, nevertheless, be rotten to the core. We have no objection in principle to exposures of corruption as long as they are clearly and consistently placed within the context of capitalist society. We do object, however, to their use as a substitute for real political journalism - the linking of socialist ideas to the spontaneous struggles of the class, with the aim of influencing and winning to our position the vanguard of those struggles.

# rank and file papers

The nature of SW in turn cripples the rank-and-file papers. In fact, the gulf between economic agitation and political propaganda is strengthened in this field. Rank-and-file papers must not be left merely to pass wage-rates between militants. We are not trying to create revolutionaries in admiration of our ability to do the work for which the TU bureaucracy is incapable. These papers are the major weapons with which we can develop around us a real rank-and-file movement.

For this reason, rank-and-file papers must genuinely be controlled by their readers - they must not be flimsy fronts for IS (this distinction between their role and that of SW has never been clearly grasped). They must hold regular conferences and local meetings open to all trade unionists in the given industry who actively support the programme of the paper. It is within these movements that IS cdes must fight for our politics. We must be attempting to build the rank-and-file groups as arenas for our members. There are no short cuts in this direction.

If these papers are to create a rank-and-file movement on a solid footing, they must do so by raising the political issues posed in local and national struggles. At the moment, the rank-and-file papers have not consistently done this. Nowhere is the question of the TU bureaucracy more acutely posed than in the struggles covered by these papers. It is not enough merely to call for TU democracy in their programmes, nor is it sufficient to document particular sell-outs. Instead, the papers must repeatedly raise the nature of the TU bureaucracy, as well as of the crisis in particular industries.

Only if this is done, and if IS cdes take seriously their task of arguing politics within the arenas of the rank-and-file papers, can we build the political kernel without which no rank-and-file movement will survive.

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# TRADE UNION WORK

A group with little more than the beginnings of a working-class base can justify its competition with other working-class parties only by demonstrating in practice the superiority of its industrial strategy. For a revolutionary, the success of this strategy is judged not only by the material advances made but also to the extent that rank-and-file participation is increased and political understanding widened during the course of the struggle. To achieve this, our industrial strategy cannot be divorced from, but must be linked organically to, a political programme.

The extreme reluctance or inability of the group's leadership to derive the appropriate slogans from its own political analysis is well illustrated by the arguments advanced against the slogan, "General Strike to Smash the Act". Both in the case of the Pentonville jailings and in the James Goad affair at CAV, Sudbury, the question of the Act and of the class nature of the law should have been raised to effect a development from militant trade unionism to socialist consciousness.

The Goad affair followed hot on the heels of the docks dispute - it presented once again the crucial political issues of working-class organisations under attack by the capitalist state. In the months between the two struggles, SW should have carried propaganda articles which

explained the need to smash the act and put forward the necessary strategy. To prevent the dissipation of working-class energy in sporadic skirmishes, it was essential to state that the Act can be defeated only by a general strike. Outside mass working-class action, such explanation could only take the form of propaganda.

But, when the Good struggle blew up, it became necessary to raise the agitational slogan of general strike. SW should have carried it as a centre-piece, our cdes should have been instructed to raise it in the factories and factory bulletins. Stress should have been laid upon the massive danger of the Act to the organised working class, and upon the necessity of smashing it once and for all. Of course it was necessary to talk about "defending the AUEW", but our central task was to generalise the struggle from a single union to the whole of the class. Instead, IS chose to tag along behind, rather than to relate to and advance the struggle.

Again, our politics have been toned-down with regard to the AUEW leadership - when this "leadership" has pursued a disastrous course from the failure of the national claim to the sequestrations via the re-election of Conway. All these defeats revealing the limitations of reformist confrontation with class legislation, as well as bureaucratic fear of unleashing rank-and-file power, are a massive confirmation of our propaganda. From our analysis of the TU bureaucracy to the need for democratic fighting unions. But again a preference for following the struggle prevented us from making political capital -- by our inability to translate a superior but abstract understanding into immediate concrete demands.

Pressure from the Stalinists and Tribunites produced unwarranted illusions in Scanlon (SW editorial 298) - a panic sinking together of the "left" in face of the growing strength of the right. But nothing will assist the right wing of the AUEW so much as the absence of a principled alternative. Without such an alternative, the rank and file must be further demoralised - and demoralisation is the food of reaction. Yet no alternative, if it is to have any hope of success, can be anything but savage to the policies of Scanlon. For it is his claim to fight the government that has led to the growth of the right. To declare opposition to the Act was to invite a government attack which was certainly provided. But to pretend to fight while taking absolutely no measures to secure victory, as Scanlon did not, was a suicidal policy from which the right is now reaping a rich harvest. Of course we defend, against the capitulating right, the policy of total opposition to the Act, but to make that defence synonymous with the defence of Scanlon is to allow the right to equate us with him.

This state of political disarray makes it entirely understandable that our industrial cdes are not left unmoved by the panic pressure of the Stalinists and Tribunites. Which is why the disorganised state of the fractions can no longer be tolerated, and why it is absolutely essential for cdes to overcome the resistance of the IS leadership to the holding of annual industrial conferences.

Organisational fragmentation is the reflection of the absence of a national line, understood and fought for by the rank-and-file membership. For cdes to be able to argue for our politics, there must be fractional programmes hammered out at national aggregates, and industrial conferences bringing the fractions together with the perspective of building a national rank-and-file movement. However necessary such rallies as that held for Fine Tubes, they cannot substitute for the group's industrial membership meeting to debate and develop our strategy and tactics. The fractions at a local and regional level should prepare resolutions for these conferences regularly convened,

and the conferences should submit resolutions to the National Conference. And, because trade-union sectionalism is an obstacle to the development of revolutionary consciousness, no distinction should be made in the importance of white- and blue-collar union work.

Another matter of dispute within IS has been the seeking of TU positions. Here, if we argue that the rank and file must control their unions to make them fighting organisations, then we have to be seen by the class to act accordingly - to seek election on our politics and not on an opportunistic basis or by behind-the-scenes manipulation.

But our key task at present is the building of SW readers' groups in the offices and factories, gathering advanced militants around us. For these groups to have meaning and life, they must be controlled from within. And it is absolutely essential that they be seen as component parts of the geographical branches. The development of the geographical branch, the regional and the fractional structures, must commend our present energies. Factory branches in direct relationship with the "centre" must be opposed as a premature diversion which could both dangerously distort the all-round development of the revolutionary cadre, and undermine the geographical branch deprived of its industrial base.

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We, the undersigned comrades, believe that the ideas outlined in the platform must be taken up and embodied in the practice of the group for I.S. to meet the challenge and seize the opportunities offered by the present period.

Derek Cattell	(B'ham N.E.)
Dave Hughes	(B'ham South)
Stuart King	(B'ham South)
Dick Pratt	(B'ham South)
Eddie MacWilliams	(Bradford)
Phil Mileman	(Cardiff)
Bernard MacAdam	(Leicester)
Paul Winstone	(Leicester)
Bill Coppock	(Manchester)
Harry Cowan	(Salford)
Arnie Prout	(Stoke)
Dave Stocking	(Stoke)
Mike Covell	(Warley)
Joe Quigley	(Warley)
Godfrey Webster	(Warley)
Frank Phillips	(Wolverhampton)