workers power

25p

The need for a workers' answer to the crisis.

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INTERNATIONAL SOCIALISTS

SWP

1975

Preface

The Workers Power Group was formed at the end of 1975 as a result of the expulsion from I.S. of the Left Faction. The publication of 'A Workers Answer To The Crisis' in 1975 as a pre-conference document for the I.S. Conference represented the culmination of a number of positions fought for against the errors of that organisation by the Left Faction. The Faction had a continuous existence in I.S. from 1972. The position taken by the Cliff leadership over the Aldershot bombing - condemnation of the act as "individual terrorism" with not a word of support for those fighting British Imperialism - signalled the end to any serious work by I.S. on Ireland. The inability of I.S. to clearly distinguish between the violence of the oppressed and the violence of the oppressor was demonstrated again even more graphically after the Birmingham bombings when I.S. placed IRA 'terror' on the same level as British Army terror. Its slogan "Stop the Bombings: Troops Out of Ireland" was a cowardly and evasive response to the wave of anti-Irish chauvinism which swept Britain.

I.S.'s capitulation on Ireland increasingly revealed to the Left Faction a deep-rooted economism which expressed itself in a variety of ways. The Left Faction took up the fight to build a genuine rank and file movement around a fighting programme as against IS's method of limiting its demands and activities to militant trade unionism whilst at the same time tying them organisationally to IS. We predicted that the IS stranglehold would destroy most of these formations. It has. We also fought against IS's lack of work amongst women and its reduction of perspectives for that work to questions of purely economic demands.

The Left Faction also fought against IS's totally incorrect approach to the building of an International - "An International can only be built <u>after</u> the development of strong national groupings". The practice which flowed from this, the 'collecting' of fraternal organisations internationally without a shred of clear programmatic agreement has likewise ended in failure. As the list of ISs ex-fraternal organisations (Lutte Ouvriere, Avanguardia Operaia and the PRP (BR)) demonstrates an international tendency for the re-creation of a revolutionary communist international can only be built around the fight for programmatic clarity. The inability of IS to develop common principled positions internationally was thus integrally linked to the inability to develop a programme outlining strategy and tactics for the working class capable of guiding their practice in the class stmuggle in Britain. The Left Faction fought for such clarity based on the method of Trotsky's Transitional Programme.

The absence of any conception of strategy and of the revolutionary party's duty to formulate it led to IS tailing workers struggles. Whilst this was a matter of tailing the mass upsurge of militancy which characterised the '72 to '74 period IS could maintain the illusion of playing an active revolutionary role. However even during this period they were overtaken by the mass action of workers during the Pentonville jailings period and failed to raise the call for a General Strike until long after large numbers of workers were already in action. The post-1975 downturn revealed IS's complete inability to give a political lead.

The advent of the Labour Government and the onset of the most serious crisis for British and World Capitalism produced the alliance between the Trade Union Bureaucracy and the Government embodied in the wage, job and social service cutting Social Contract. This threw the class backwards, producing confusion and demoralisation amongst the rank and file leadership IS had

tailed and adapted to. In the absence of economic militancy IS simply turned all its attention to unemployment and The Right To Work Campaign until a new upsurge of economic militancy should come along. IS was of no use to those militants faced with the political question of how to fight a Labour Government at a time of serious crisis. The only politics that IS could offer was to baldly counterpose itself as "the alternative" to the Labour Party. The Left Faction argued that the answer was not stunts and sectarian party building but the use of a transitional programme which related to the crisis. Thus we produced "The Workers Answer to the Crisis'.

The IS leadership refused all debate and discussion. The 1975 pre-conference discussion was a farce as was the conference itself. Against the IS leadership's order to dissolve the Faction we refused and stated our intention of continuing to fight for our politics openly in the organisation. This the IS leadership would not tolerate. As we said in one of our documents the organisation had developed "a caricature of democratic centralism". Political debate and clarity with the necessary accountability that is a vital component of healthy democratic centralism was driven out of IS in a series of witch hunts and expulsions starting in 1972 with the expulsion of the Trotskyist Tendency (Workers Fight) and continuing with the expulsion of the "Right Faction" (now the RCG) the Left Faction and the IS Opposition (Workers League). Subsequently several local groupings of IS members have been either expelled or left en bloc finding it impossible to conduct any form of democratic debate inside the organisation.

In the first issue of our magazine 'Workers Power' published in October 1975 we stressed our commitment to revolutionary regroupment, "around a clear programme - a clear strategy and precise tactics". The fusion between ourselves and the Workers Fight grouping was entered into by us on a perfectly principled basis in December 1975. The two groupings had independently adopted principled positions on questions such as Ireland, that separated both organisations from the rest of the revolutionary left. We shared a rejection of the Cliff and Healey traditions of opportunism and sectarianism. We shared the position that no democratic centralist international based on a revolutionary programme was in existence. Tactical differences existed on work in the Troops Out Movement and the relative importance of a tactical orientation to the mass reformist party. The need was recognised at the time of fusion for a period of political argument and debate, central to which was the production and discussion of an Action Programme, culminating in a conference which would terminate all the organisational arrangements made at fusion. No such debate took place.

The debate was sabotaged by the ex-Workers Fight leadership. The main areas of difference were subject to a deliberate clouding and evasion and every attempt to focus them was considered as factional or "cliquist". Clear and open political debate on the orientation and strategy of the ICL was impossible. Slander and manoeuvre culminated in the ex Workers Fight leaders hijacking the leading bodies of the organisation prior to the ICL conference. With the unconstitutional suspension of all Workers Power members of the ICL political committee their attempt to advertise the conference as that of a 'fused organisation' was both absurd and dishonest. At a meeting on September 19th 1976 we decided to recognise the break up of the fusion as complete and to reconstitute ourselves as an independent organisation.

Despite the failure of the fusion with Workers Fight (now I-CL), Workers Power remains committed to joint work on a principled basis and to sharp, political debate with other tendencies on the international and British left. We believe of key importance is a reassessment of world Trotskyism's failure to come to grips with the realities of post-war capitalism, to develop and re-elaborate Trotsky's 1938 Programme. This is no academic

task. It is central to the development of strategy and tactics today which can take the working class forward to the seizure of power. This is the central task facing the revolutionary movement today. Only honest political argument around these and other issues can provide the basis for meaningful revolutionary regroupment. The re-publication of our 1975 document is intended to contribute to this debate.

It was in the context of IS's failure to fight for a principled and programmatic way forward for the working class that we undertook the publication of 'Workers Answer to the Crisis'. We counterposed this to the empirical 'play it by ear' attitude of IS. IS's (SWP's) continued indifference to strategy, despite its sectarian posturing as 'the party', make this document as relevant today as in 1975. It also serves to differentiate us from those who would invoke the 1938 Programme as the timeless panacea to all the problems now facing revolutionary socialists. We hold by Trotsky's statement that 'the proletarian Vanguard needs not a catalogue of truisms but a manual of action' and it is in the light of this that we made this specific contribution towards developing a strategy for the overthrow of capitalism.

Workers Power, May 1977.

introduction

Unprecedented opportunities are offered to revolutionaries by the crisis of capitalism. The crisis of direction within the working class movement opens up an ever larger audience for our politics and strategy. Now is the time when our direction should be clear and our confidence high. The crisis calls for the utmost degree of clarity in our politics and perspectives.

We consider the present leadership of I.S. has failed to give the organisation that sense of direction and perspective. We think they are wrong to suggest that it is in fact the existence of a relatively new Labour Government that has caused the present stagnation of the organisation. We need to look further than this to find the causes of continued membership turnover, of our failure to grow and of the collapse of many of our factory branches.

It is our view that unless we can offer the correct answers to the crisis of capitalism and of the labour movement we can only grow in a haphazard and uneven fashion. Our answers and policies will be tested more than ever before by sections of the class in search of a clear alternative. Unless our answers and programme are correct the organisation will continue to be plagued by a crisis of direction and orientation.

We think the present leadership has not just failed to give the organisation a clear perspective and line. It is offering a way forward to the working class movement which is wrong on many issues. We attempt to outline here the answer we consider I.S. should argue for in the working class movement in the coming period. It is a programme for a Workers' Answer to the Crisis. We consider that the present state of the organisation bears urgent witness to the need for an alternative perspective. No such alternative can be infallible. Any alternative for the organisation can only be developed on the basis of full debate and discussion. Only such a debate can put our perspective to the test of the real world. We submit this document to that debate, and challenge the leadership to openly reply and argue their position before the membership of I.S. Only in such a debate can the leadership test its perspectives and answers.

The document is in three major parts. Part one contains a characterisation of the present crisis of capitalism and the problems posed to the working class movement. The second section will outline our major criticisms of I.S. policies and answers. The last section will outline our alternative programme.

the crisis and the response

Periods of economic crisis are built into the capitalist system. The history of capitalism is marked by the tendency to periods of 'boom' - frantic scrambling after new investment - followed by 'slump', cut-backs and unemployment. To be competitive the capitalist firm has to engage in ever more expensive rounds of investment. Capitalism cannot keep the productivity of labour (i.e. the amount of surplus value extracted from the working class) abreast of these increasingly huge capital outlays. Compared with these ever more massive sums required for competitive investment the capitalist's proportion of profit has a tendency to decline. In this situation the bosses must attempt to further step up their exploitation of the working class.

In the twentieth century capitalism has failed to step up the rate of profit extracted from the workers in proportion to its massive capital. In the nineteenth century capitalism raised the productivity of labour at a tremendous rate. Since about 1900 this rate has not kept up with the size of capital investments.

But why should W Europe and America be facing a serious recession now and why do we think that this will be followed by a return of a boom/slump cycle of increasing violence? Since the second world war the major capitalist economies have felt only mild recessions and have grown in a relatively orderly way. This has been possible because the tendency of the rate of profit to fall has been partially and temporarily off-set in two ways.

Firstly, American imperialism expanded after the war and invested heavily in high profit yielding areas thus developing new markets and new areas of production. In this way America came to dominate the world system.

Secondly, state intervention in the economy created guaranteed markets and 'siphoned-off' capital. This was particularly true of the arms industry, which provided the military back-up to America's imperialist domination. Thus the 'arms economy' was not a 'higher stage' of capitalism replacing imperialism. It was itself the product of the rising star of American imperialism. The I.S. leadership has repeatedly stated that the arms economy represents a 'new stage' in capitalist history. We consider it represents the ascendancy of American imperialism. But neither state expenditure in arms nor American expansion could provide a permanent solution to the problems of the system. Quite the opposite. They lead, in the long term, to further distortions and difficulties in the world economy.

America, because of its massive arms budget and capital outflow, began to suffer a chronic balance of payments deficit. This grew to alarming proportions by the mid-sixties. At the same time economies such as Japan and Germany grew under the shelter of America. When America found herself in difficulties they became dangerous competitors. Similarly the crisis of the system has created a little 'breathing space' for some of the undeveloped economies: resulting, for example, in the oil price increases.

The result has been an accelerating tendency to trade and monetary war. Lastly the system bred an unprecedented rate of inflation. In part this was built into the system: the failure to raise the productivity of labour in proportion to the size of capital investment. But the problem has been heightened recently by shortages and bottle-necks caused by the boom of 72/73. By the inflationary pressure of unproductive government spending, and by monopolies simply increasing prices to maintain 'cash flow' and profits. The still central position of banks and finance houses in monopoly capitalism has been revealed by the crisis. Their role as a supplier of capital, and therefore arbitrator over investment plans has been strengthened. They have contributed to the crisis by progressive raising of interest rates, hitting not only manufacturing industry but also areas like the local - government programmes. Furthermore, until recently, the working-class has resisted attempts to cut real wages, they have prevented capitalism solving its crisis at their expense.

The prospect which this has created for world capitalism is a return to the violent booms and slumps typical of the pre-war system. The immediate recession which we are entering will be characterised by sharpening trade and monetary war between different blocs of national capital (hence the squabbling within the Common Market).

Production will be cut back and unemployment will begin to bite. This will be felt unevenly, motors and building particularly severely hit, but everywhere it will be accompanied by rationalization and productivity drives. 'Inessential' government spending (i.e. social services) will be cut back and stagnate.

But the central attack will be an attempt to cut back real wages; the only real solution capitalism has to curb the decline in the rate of profit. In every major capitalist country this means stepping up the use of the state machine to break organisations of the working class.

Within this crisis the British ruling class finds itself in a weak position to compete. Its capital equipment is often decrepit when compared to, for example, Germany. As a result investment return in Britain is comparatively low and labour productivity is drastically so. This led, in the 1960's, to British big business abandoning the so-called 'Commonwealth Strategy' (huge overseas investment) and turn to Europe for a 'solution'. In addition the British ruling class

faces a major crisis for its domination of Ireland. This crisis has its roots in the redundant character of much British capital investment in the North of Ireland. The British ruling class hoped to achieve a more profitable economic hold over Ireland as a whole.

There can be no immediate solution for British imperialism in the North of Ireland. The spectre of a Protestant dominated convention threatens any fragile peace that British imperialism can achieve. The Irish crisis will remain a central component of the crisis of the British ruling class.

This political crisis is further exacerbated by the failure of the previous Tory government to enforce rigid wage control or anti-trade union laws. This failure has led to the Tories - the open party of big business - being incapable of taking government. At the moment the ruling class is having to rely on Labour and the trade union bureaucracy. The 'Social Contract', although it will have a debilitating effect on the working class movement, can only be a short term expedient for British capitalism. The British bourgeoisie is, therefore, going to be forced into a series of ever more drastic solutions - none of which can guarantee its success or even survival.

It will have to seek out further aid and credit, whether from the International Monetary Fund, or the Shah of Persia. The conditions imposed on these loans can only further sharpen the social crisis of British society. Whole sections of the economy will have to be dismantled or drastically 'rationalized'. The attempt to shackle the miners to a productivity deal will be only the first attempt to drive up the productivity of British industry. All these mean higher unemployment.

Government cut backs in social services will be complemented by concessions to private investment in the hope of an "export led growth" (the aim of successive governments over the last ten years). Whilst on the wages front attempts to hold down increases are inevitable. The 'Social Contract' cannot achieve this with the speed and effectiveness which British capitalism requires. The Labour government is becoming increasingly aware of this. Two alternatives are being posed for the near future:

(i) An attempt to incorporate the trade union bureaucracy in some form of wage indexing schemes. Indexing and thresholding schemes aim to cut workers living standards. The wage rises are not intended to compensate for increases in prices. They aim only to take the sting out of wage militancy. It is unlikely that the British government will adopt this solution. Their recent outcry against the UPW's meagre threshold agreement shows us that much more drastic methods will be needed to cut workers living standards.

(ii) A firm harsh incomes policy or direct wage freeze. Such a policy would obviously entail conflict with the trade union bureaucracy and even splits within the government itself.

Either alternative will be enforced by growing unemployment and short-time working.

All this will be accompanied by an increasingly repressive role for the state machine. Ireland will be used both for experiments in so-called 'hot control', as an excuse for 'security' exercises in working class areas of Britain and as a resevoir of right-wing reaction should it be required. The SPG mobilizations and the Shrewsbury case and the Labour 'anti-terrorist laws' have clearly posed the danger for the working class.

Not even this battery of reaction will ensure victory to the ruling class but the coming period will see the implementation of all of them. They present an unprecedented challenge to the working class movement. How well is the labour movement prepared to meet this attack?

THE WORKING CLASS RESPONSE

The working class, especially at rank and file level, has shown great resilience and combativity. The re-discovery of the flying picket and the occupation strike bear testimony to this. So does the smashing of the Industrial Relations Act, the freeing of the Pentonville Five, the re-awakening of militancy amongst the miners and the subsequent fall of the Heath government.

The resilience of the working class therefore stands as a major obstacle to all the ruling class 'solutions' to the crisis. Especially so as new layers of the working class, like women and blacks are drawn into the struggle. However, crucial political weaknesses co-exist with this mood.

For twenty years since the war the labour movement was fragmented. Struggles were typically short and local whilst the rank and file had little involvement in politics or trade union affairs at a national level. Comrade Cliff has pointed this out many times. But to assume that reformist ideas disappeared from the shop floor is entirely mistaken. They were in cold storage and the class battles of the last five years have thawed them out. The hold of reformism over the British working class is ideological rather than organisational. Unless a new leadership can be built on a principled socialist programme the class will be weak and unprepared on crucial questions of the day.

The response of the class to the 'Social Contract' has revealed these weaknesses. What is the 'Social Contract'? It is, firstly, an attempt to draw the trade union bureaucrats into the state machine, voluntarily accepting and selling wage-restraint to their members. Secondly,

it is an attempt to exploit the reservoir of reformist ideas which exists at all levels of the labour movement, ideas like 'national interest', 'we are all in the same boat', 'whatever its faults Labour still stands for the working man' etc. It seeks to pull the wool over the eyes of the low paid workers (particularly women) with its talk of fairness and concern for the lower paid.

In this situation women, either as one of the weakest sections of the labour force or as unorganised housewives, will be facing increasing dangers of being manipulated by the ruling class. There will be the danger of a wider split between men and women on the shop floor. Because of women's traditional conservative position they are far more likely to be persuaded by government propaganda.

At its best the response to the 'Social Contract' has been fragmented, local and unco-ordinated, for example the Scottish strikes. Of course a large part of the responsibility for this lies with the trade union leaders (including the 'lefts'). But as I.S. Journal pointed out: "Many, perhaps most, of the actual strikers, regard themselves as 'special cases' in so far as they think about the matter in general political terms." ISJ 74 p.4

Individual groups of workers have continued to fight hard for improvements to living conditions. Almost without exception they have experienced obstruction and resistance from the trade union leaders. But the response has not been even. At worst the response has been an outbreak of craft differential disputes (e.g. the NGA) and even voluntary wage cuts (Leicester Textile Workers). Even such a traditionally strong group as the miners have been prepared to settle for an agreement which increases differentials and fails to **keep the miners abreast of rising living costs.**

The failure to take up the challenge of the 'Social Contract' is summed up by the actual fall in living standards over the last year. Even if we take the misleading figure of a 28% increase in basic wage rates during 1974 it is clear that after tax and short-time working the class has not been keeping up with the 20% rate of inflation. This does not represent a sufficient cut in living standards to satisfy the ruling class. It does however mean a drop in workers' real wages.

The resistance to unemployment and the short-time working does not yet compare with the battles of the 1971 mini-slump.

The response of the trade union and Labour 'lefts' is dangerously misleading and undermines the urgent necessity for a new, revolutionary leadership in the class as a strategy to meet the need to restructure drastically British capitalism's investment structure. Wedgewood-Benn is peddling the dead-end 'solution' of workers co-operatives thus involving workers in their own exploitation and encouraging the ditching of hard won conditions. This ploy is unfortunately reducing the level

of struggle against redundancy with sections of the class remaining passive in the hope of a hand-out.

Even the extreme 'left' wing bureaucrats like Scargill and McGahey have no political answer for the class as a whole. They have no alternative to sectional economic militancy. When faced with the arguments about 'community interest' they desperately reply that they are only interested in the miners and no-one else. Thus they walk into the trap set by inflation: the threat to the fighting unity of the class as a whole.

Similarly the 'left' leaders are about to open a campaign to withdraw Britain from the Common Market. Whatever the result their efforts can only strengthen chauvinism by spreading 'anti-foreign' ideas and myths of a 'sovereign British Parliament'. The growth of protectionist ideas amongst workers in threatened industries and the Jack Jones, Wedgewood-Benn plan for import controls will further strengthen this tendency.

The weakness of the political response of the class is underlined by the Shrewsbury case and Ireland. Despite the campaign the pickets are still in jail. No generalised working class movement to withdraw the troops has developed: a situation for which the revolutionary organisations, especially I.S. bears a heavy responsibility.

All this is not to say that the class lacks revolutionary potential. It does not. But at the moment it lacks organisation and, especially, political direction. However we do deny the unwarranted optimism which characterises Cliff's book "The Crisis". He sees only the potential, and none of the political obstacles, thus ignoring and underestimating the tasks of revolutionaries. Instead he relies on the 'spontaneous' battles of the class and the hope that 'leap-frogging' wage claims will put the class back on the right road.

The fact is that <u>at the moment</u> the class is on the defensive. The traditional organisations remain intact and resilient. The question for us is how to turn this into an offensive.

One thing that is needed is a force which can unite all the fragmented struggles of the rank and file. This means a rank and file organisation. But more than this is needed. An organisation which <u>only</u> puts militants into contact with one another is not sufficient. We need to win the class to a revolutionary perspective.

This is not done by on the one hand, simply encouraging trade union struggles and, on the other, preaching the virtues of the planned economy. This is the approach of "The Crisis: Social Contract or Socialism". I.S. needs a programme. This document presents the main lines of the programme we need.

Some comrades in I.S. argue that this is not so; that the real movements of the class are worth a dozen programmes that there are no 'paper solutions' and so forth.

There is an element of truth in this argument, but only a grain. Without a real base in the class struggle a 'programme' is worthless. But at the present moment the opposite danger is far greater. Without a conscious socialist direction the struggles of the rank and file will be squandered away. To deny the need for a programme is to admit that I.S. has no real answers to the problems the working class faces. It leaves I.S. on the side-lines cheering the class along but not even attempting to give a socialist direction to the struggle.

The argument advanced against a programme would carry more weight if those who support it were not exactly the same people who, at the 1973 I.S. conference, argued that a programme was indispensable. A draft programme was accepted in outline at that conference. It re-emerged at the last conference to be accepted as the I.S. programme. Since then it has remained a dead letter. Not because a programme is unnecessary but because it was a thoroughly bad programme.

A real programme would not remain a dead letter. It would sum up the experience of the class so far, outline the main strengths and weaknesses of the class and lay down guide-lines for the tasks which face us. It would be constantly tested against the demands of the real class struggle. It would start with the actual demands of the class, however limited these may be, and put forward a system of demands, slogans and forms of struggle which lead the class in the direction of a united offensive for socialism. This is the kind of programme we argue for. Against this the record and approach of I.S. have to be measured.

I.S. and the crisis

At the time of our greatest tasks and sharpest tests there is a deep crisis in the organisation. Everywhere we look we see signs of that crisis. Everywhere comrades are feeling a lack of leadership and direction. Despite last years heated debate about Socialist Worker the paper has changed little. It still does not provide the direction and answers that we need.

Despite last years heated debates about internal democracy, and despite conference resolutions insisting on a return to a fully democratic internal life, little has changed. Our internal life is stagnant, discussion remains at a standstill, and leadership debates remain closed to the majority of the membership.

What is wrong? We don't accept the usual explanations. It is not simply a matter of the wrong personalities being at the top. Neither is it due to organisational mistakes. We think that the roots of the problem are to be found in the organisations political answer to the current crisis. Only if our answers are right can the group develop direction and momentum. At present I.S. is not consistantly growing, at a time when growth has never been more necessary. We have not solved the problem of a massive regular turnover of membership. In this situation we have to look at the way forward I.S. is arguing in the working class movement.

The Leadership has tried to answer the problem by giving us a book to sell on the subject. This might temporarily give the organisation a common goal - the realisation and organisation of book sales - but it is of little use if the answers of the book are wrong.

We think I.S. has the wrong answer in theory and practice to many major issues facing the working class movement. We will look at these mistakes. But for us it is necessary to look beyond a few mistakes on single issues. We will argue that these mistakes have their roots in I.S.'s entire approach to building the party. We will state simply our disagreements with the major positions adopted by I.S. We shall then argue our alternative.

I.S. AND THE WAGES FRONT

The I.S. position on the wages battle is a simple one, we call for large 30% wage increases and no restrictions on wage bargain times. In addition we call for equal pay now and for a £35 a week minimum wage. Our arguments against this position are clear:

(1) As a strategy it in no way challenges the traditional sectionalism of the movement. It offers no perspective that would enable strong and advanced sections to lead a fight for the entire class. 30% wage demands does not offer a path for uniting the struggles of the class, for overcoming its divisions by a policy fought for by the class as a whole.

(2) To whole sections of the class without traditions and strength the demand seems arbitrary and unobtainable. Even where it does win support workers will often be prepared to settle for less in the bargaining process. The present level of wage settlements and crisis will strengthen this tendency.

(3) The demand is not related to the two major problems facing workers - namely roaring inflation and impending bankruptcy in whole sectors of British industry. The call of Cliff's book for workers to battle over profits is of little use when a major crisis of profitability has hit British capitalism.

(4) The demands ignore the fact that the militancy of the class is not inexhaustible. The call for more and more rounds of militancy on old sectional lines fails to recognise this. We cannot expect the class to turn to socialism as an alternative to endless rounds of wage battles. Defeats and exhaustion on the industrial front have spelt disaster for the working class movement in the past. As the I.S. pamphlet on the National Front said of the advent of Italian fascism:
"It was only when the leaders of an exhausted working class failed to turn massive industrial struggles and strength into a socialist offensive against the state that disaster came."
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(5) Inflation threatens the class with demoralisation and disunity. There are signs of strong sections of workers no longer going forward for fear of isolation and lack of support (e.g. the miners last time round). Even more sinister and dangerous is the spectre of weak sections turning on the well organised, blaming the big battalions for their plight. In the face of this Cliff continues to claim that inflation is a "pressure for unity of the working class". He continues to call for sectional wage battle in the mistaken confidence that the capitalist crisis will unite the class for us.

At a time when crisis and inflation poses sharply the need for new struggles I.S. can only offer more of the time worn methods of struggle. This ignores a new and central feature in the industrial struggle.

(6) It ignores the question of thresholds and indexing schemes which will continue to pose themselves sharply to groups of workers with the battle to consolidate thresholds, the projected end of the

threshold scheme and government and employers flirtation with indexing schemes. Last years battles over the thresholds brought whole new sections of workers into active struggle. I.S. applauded and supported that struggle while pointing out the dangers of thresholds in later propaganda. To limit ourselves to the 30% now wage demand is to cut ourselves off from the preoccupations of hundreds of thousands of workers. In many unions the right wing are proposing hopelessly inadequate threshold clauses in the hope of taking the steam out of wage militancy. The UPW deal is a case in point. In this situation I.S. must be able to offer a clear alternative both to the old methods of wage struggle and to wage cutting threshold schemes. We do not think the "30% now" claim poses such an alternative.

I.S. AND UNEMPLOYMENT

Escalating unemployment not only threatens the living standards of the working class. It brings into question traditional attitudes towards property and control. The Meriden 'co-operative' and the British Leyland stewards nationalisation proposals are examples of this. As the crisis deepens so increasingly groups of workers will look toward Benn's schemes as a solution.

In order to get our politics across we need a clear and comprehensible alternative to Benn type nationalisation and to co-operative schemes. We will not be able to rely on descriptions of Benn's real motives and past record. We will need not only to argue for militant struggle, but also for clear goals and objectives of struggle. We must seek to raise in our agitation and propaganda

(1) The need to place no reliance on Benn or the trade union leaders.

(2) That workers must take no responsibility for the capitalist crisis.

(3) That workers must control and supervise all aspects of production that concern them. In this way we raise directly the question of which class should control, not only in the factory but in society as a whole.

I.S. has quite rightly consistently argued for no reliance on the official leaderships, for militant occupation tactics. It has consistently argued for Nationalisation with no compensation to bankrupt capitalists. On the question of workers' control however it has not offered a clear alternative to current notions of workers incorporation and participation in capitalism's crisis.

I.S. has two distinct ways of raising the question of workers' control.

(a) The first argument is simple enough. It sees 'workers' control' as an inoperable slogan raised only for propaganda purposes

Take John Deason (SW 8/2/75) for example:
"Workers control of individual factories without workers control of the economic fabric of society is unrealistic. You cannot build islands of socialism in a sea of capitalism.
Socialists must pose the demand of full nationalisation without compensation for firms threatening closure. This is a realistic alternative to cash handouts and co-ops." (Our emphasis)

or Socialist Worker's answer to the British Leyland crisis (SW 11/1/75):
"We know real workers control won't exist this side of the revolution ..... We call for nationalisation as the best policy to defend jobs and fight for the maintenance of pay and conditions."

In this argument 'workers control' is about 'the future society'. It is not an issue for the here and now.

(b) The second argument does not rule out the demand altogether. It equates workers control with
"the struggle to encroach on managements rights" (ISJ 73)
An editorial in SW 25/11/74 put this position most clearly.
"By workers control we mean shop stewards control over hiring and firing, the pace of work, safety and other matters affecting working conditions."

Workers control is posed as the struggle over manning and conditions. But this is already part of the struggle in all well organised factories by they faced with redundancy or not. The argument does not see 'workers control' as any more than maintenance of strong shop floor organisation.

We will be offering a programme for the fight for a workers veto and workers inspection. We consider that the current I.S. position can offer no real alternative except for militant action to secure government money. It offers no new goals of struggle in the battle over property and control in the factory.

I.S. AND THE LABOUR PARTY: GOVERNMENT AND REFORMISM

If I.S. is able to offer no real alternative on the two central industrial questions facing the working class, it has no clearer concrete and immediate answer to the Labour Party and the hold of reformist ideas.

Cliff's book again points out the old truth that in the 50's and 60's the battle to improve conditions and living standards did not centre on the question of government. But the events of 1970 to 1975 have sharply posed the question of government within the immediate struggle. Wage freezes, incomes policy and increased state repression have made sure this is so.

However cynical most workers are about the Labour Party it remains the party that the majority of workers turn to when the question of who should be in government is posed. The trade union bureaucracy, including its left, and the CP constantly push a Labour government to the centre of their programme.

The programme of Benn, and the likelihood of splits in Labour's ranks over wage control, mean that reformism in the coming period will present itself as some kind of answer to large sections of the class. We will find ourselves competing with other 'socialists' and advocates of workers control on the shop floor. Massive cuts in social services, increased state repression and cries for 'strong government' mean revolutionaries must be able to offer a recognisable and realisable alternative. It will not be enough for us to call for 'socialism', nor will it be of any use to urge a return to day-to-day shop floor issues.

We don't think I.S. has such an alternative. It has no clear programme for a workers answer to the crisis which should enable us to fight along side reformist workers and break them from their reformist ideas.

This is demonstrated by I.S.'s approach to the Labour Party. What is that approach?

1. A tendency to a crude Tweedledum-Tweedledee 'what does it matter' approach. This ignores the importance large numbers of workers attach to the question of who is in government.

2. At election times this blase position has collapsed into a 'vote Labour at all costs' position. As it has been argued in the last two elections this position fails to distinguish us clearly from the reformists. It is of little use Socialist Worker arguing that the Labour Party in power will expose itself for us. It will only be exposed if we have won groups of workers who have expectations in Labour to a clear alternative solution to the crisis. To call for the building of 'the revolutionary party' or factory branches does not pose a <u>concrete</u> alternative for such workers.

If we read Cliff's book on the subject we see a similar shallow approach to the entire subject. He claims reformism is dying on its feet. As evidence of this he amasses sociological data to show that the party composition is changing and that the constituency parties are decaying. (In fact this forgets that the class has been tied to the Labour Party through the trade union bureaucracy not through mass attendance at ward and borough meetings.) Cliff argues that a new tradition of do it yourself reformism is emerging. By 'do it yourself reformism' he means that tendency to rely on local and sectional trade union struggle to win improvements in living conditions.

Now he is right to say that industrial muscle is worth a million speeches from the opposition benches. Of course he is right to say that the shop stewards movement has notoriously ignored national political issues. But you cannot jump from this to suggest that the class does not see the Labour Party as its party, or that in capitalist crisis advanced sections of the class will not in the first place look to reformist governmental solutions.

Such workers won't be argued with by Cliff's sociology. His claim that Wilson is too respectable to break the law, or that 'he does not know any power workers or busmen' does not hit at the roots of the class's ties with the Labour Party. The vast majority of workers will not be surprised that "economic and industrial issues are hardly ever mentioned" in party meetings (Cliff). They see the trade union branch and the shop stewards committee as the place for those decisions. They see politics and government as something seperate.

Cliff thinks that the crisis poses 'do it yourself reformism' as an alternative to Labour's organisational decay. He warmly embraces 'do it yourself reformism'. He forgets that Labour's political hold will only be broken by a workers governmental answer to the crisis, which can be raised and fought for on Trades Councils, on Shop Stewards Committees - in fact wherever the twin diversions of Labour reformism and 'do it yourself reformism' raise their head. I.S. in general, and Cliff's book in particular, have no such alternative.

I.S. AND WOMEN

The history of women's work in I.S. is characterised by a consistant lack of strategy and perspective. But there are reasons for this. I.S. has consistantly failed to link the exploitation of women in their work-place to their wider oppression as women. It has always sought to reduce the womens question to a mere question of particular economic exploitation. Consistant women's work in I.S. has suffered from the overall failure of the organisation to look beyond the immediate issues of day-to-day struggle in its strategy for building a revolutionary workers party. What are the results of this?

1. The characterisation of women as either housewives and therefore peripheral to the struggle at the point of production or part of a backward and conservative labour force whose lack of militancy and political awareness makes it "difficult to recruit them".

2. A perpetual tendency to reduce the question of women to the immediate economic struggle. As a result the organisation has tended to see the equal pay struggle and women's strikes as the centre and sum of the women's issue.

3. This leads of course to an underestimation of the specific problems of sexual oppression. What do we mean by sexual oppression? We mean that you can't just see women as workers, as some comrades would prefer to do. They are wives, mothers and girlfriends and as such are directly oppressed mainly through the family.

4. Not surprisingly therefore women's work has a history of neglect in I.S. Cliff in his book devotes a short section to women. This in itself is inadequate. But the piece has little to offer. He outlines a few women's strikes many of which ended in defeat, but offers no real strategy for dealing with this except in terms of offering support, "generalising" and making "room" in the wider struggle. Seemingly "In a period of inflation we cannot afford these petty prejudices" - Tony Cliff offers no strategy for combatting them.

5. Nearly all the decisions taken at successive National Conferences on women's work have been ignored. The 1973 Equal Pay Campaign came to nothing. Except for a monthly Women's Voice virtually all of the resolutions of the 1974 Conference have gone unheeded. Some Rank and File papers still have no programme of demands on women. Education notes and pamphlets have not been produced. There have been no perspectives produced for women's work in the present period. Without perspectives there is little use in our producing a women's newspaper.

This is not just a record of neglect or mistakes. It shows a thorough going failure to grasp either the nature or importance of the women's question. As a result the organisation has no way forward for over half of the working class and no strategy for integrating and developing women's work in the present period.

I.S. AND IRELAND

Similar errors have led to a series of failures and a disgraceful record on the question of Ireland. Dubbed likewise as 'peripheral' the organisation's Irish work has been characterised by mistaken analysis and non-activity. The organisation has never seen the Irish crisis as central to our tasks of breaking the British working class from the ideas of the bourgeoisie. This has had three results.

(a) A perpetual tendency to minimise the dimensions of the crisis in Ireland. By 1972 Cliff was declaring the IRA to be finished. The 1973 Irish Conference stated that the Irish crisis was over due to the Sunningdale Agreement. Both of these positions have been refuted by the ex-left faction of the time and by events since then.

(b) Ever since the Aldershot bombings posed the problems sharply amongst British workers, the organisation has repeatedly condemned, criticised and distanced ourselves from the armed struggle. The formal positions of 'unconditional but critical support for the IRA' received less and less support inside SW as soon as the bombing campaign started in England. There has been little or no explanation of our support for the armed struggle against the British army. The organisation refused to adopt the defeatist position "for the IRA against the British Army".

(c) From 1972 until late 1974 the organisations Irish work virtually ceased to exist. Despite our roots, we repeatedly refused to participate in any initiative to build a working class based movement committed to withdraw British troops. To those in the organisation who called for such involvement (only the ex-left faction) the reply was always that "we could do it better ourselves". In fact nothing was done. Annual promises at conference for a better record on Ireland over the coming year came to nothing. At the 1974 conference a similar call for a serious committment to build the Troops Out Movement was defeated. Comrades who question these criticisms of the groups Irish work should note the resolution passed at the annual conference of the Socialist Workers Movement, our fraternal organisation in Ireland. That resolution criticised I.S. for its lack of Irish work. This was not made known to the I.S. membership in the report of that conference.

But comrades will say surely things are getting better. Has not Socialist Worker contained more on Ireland recently? Are we not now giving support to the Troops Out Movement? A highly successful film tour has been carried out.

The answer to this is that the Birmingham bombings made such a position of neglect and inactivity on Ireland untenable. Now that the issue was at boiling point within the class Socialist Worker had to have answers for I.S. members.

Coverage in SW has increased considerably. However the articles tend to be mainly horror stories taken from the Irish Times, with little or no analytic content. Our support for the struggle against British Imperialism is barely outlined.

I.S. then has never seen the Irish crisis as central to the crisis of the British bourgeoisie. This is a result of an economistic approach which downgrades the national struggle because it does not conform to the pure model of workers versus bosses. Thus for example Cliff's book on the crisis does not even mention Ireland.

Why do we see Ireland as important?

(a) It is part and parcel of the crisis of our ruling class. It is also an area where the ruling class are perfecting and developing their solutions to the crisis. The defeat of British military strategy in Ireland can only make the implementation of such a strategy in Britain more difficult.

(b) The national struggle in Ireland is of crucial ideological importance. The media stokes up chauvinism among workers with its railing against 'terrorists' and support for "our boys". It was significant that the striking Scottish lorry drivers chose not to block supplies for the troops in Ireland.

The ideological importance of Ulster is not underestimated by the NF or Powell. Ulster can be a bridgehead for the militarist right wing in British politics.

(c) Our attitude to the Irish national struggle is a key test of our internationalism. An organisation committed to a clear international position on Ireland is an organisation that can 'swim against the stream' when necessary.

The class struggle in Ireland takes on an extra dimension, that of the national question. This will continue to be the case until the Irish working class defeats British imperialism. I.S. has consistently failed to understand the nature and depth of this struggle. For instance I.S. still only raises the slogans of 'Troops Out' and 'Repeal the Anti-Terrorist Legislation'. The question of self-determination for the Irish people being ommitted.

The result of this mistaken analysis has been a record of inactivity and neglect which no revolutionary organisation could be proud of.

BUT HOW DO WE EXPLAIN THESE POSITIONS? WE HAVE ARGUED BEFORE THAT WE SEE MORE THAN A SERIES OF MISTAKEN POSITIONS.

All have in common a tendency to accommodate towards and tail the immediate economic struggles of the class. We consider this to be a consistent feature of the politics of I.S. The organisation has an 'economistic' tendency to view with hostility all politics not posed directly within the economic struggle of the class. For this reason I.S. puts forward the wage and unemployment polices that it does. For this reason it considers the question of government, women and Ireland to be diversions.

This means that in a time of escalating capitalist crisis I.S. is left with no alternative forms of struggle to present to the class. It actually sees no necessity to argue for a clear alternative. We can see this most clearly if we look at Tony Cliff's book "The Crisis".

Cliff's view of the world starts with the tremendous muscle put on by the shop stewards movement in the 1960's. The problem of the shop stewards movement, he argues, is primarily one of organisation. As he puts it, the "state of morale and confidence is excellent, but the level of organisation, its structure and staffing are really appalling". For Cliff the vital question is whether morale will give way or organisation will be improved.

Cliff expects the crisis to do much of the organising for us - "inflation hurts all workers equally and must lead to greater and greater similarity of response". It is "out of the coming struggles ..... (that) ..... a new leadership will emerge from below and socialism will come in from the cold".

The picture is a remarkably clear and simple one. The defeats of the class over the last year, the problem of reformist ideas are not important. Revolutionaries must seek to generalise the struggles of the class, (although Cliff sees the crisis doing much of the generalising for us) and to organise the class through the rank and file movement. The leadership argue that we must also put over our politics in the struggle to build a revolutionary party. But they do not see our politics as a programme, a clear alternative that can be fought for. In Cliff's book and in Socialist Worker socialism is presented as an abstract description of the future ... a plentiful planned society free from crisis.

This is a perfect recipe for tailing and accommodating to the class in the everyday battles and also for posing 'socialism' as an abstract and irrelevant utopia. What we need is a programme that can offer new struggles to answer the immediate problems of the class. I.S. is not wrong because it has a few mistaken lines, because it doesn't take women seriously or because it has no new strategy on the industrial front. It is wrong because its theory of building the

party sees no need to offer an alternative programme and strategy. This is the politics of accommodation and vacillation.

The signatories of this document present the following alternative programme not in order to correct a few points, but to save the organisation from stagnation, introversion and irrelevance.

our alternative

Any programme which is not to remain a piece of paper cannot simply come out of the heads of a few party members - whether they are theoreticians, organisers or leading workers. A programme that could be fought for in real class struggles must draw on the resources of a whole organisation. The programme must be developed in a serious debate, not about theoretical abstractions, but about the key issues of strategy and tactics which the working class is faced with as a result the opening of a prolonged period of capitalist crisis. The political heart of democratic centralism is the centralisation of an organisation's political understanding and experience in a programme understood by all and carried into action by all in a disciplined fashion.

The leadership if I.S. says that it recognises the seriousness of the capitalist crisis. Tony Cliff's book sees the struggle for socialism as the only way of saving workers' organisations from demoralisation and defeat. Socialist Worker proclaims nearly every week the need for workers to take up the struggle for power as the only escape from economic decay the crisis will bring; the dramatic fall in living standards and conditions of the whole class.

Two years ago, at the 1973 Conference, Cliff rejected the call for a programme based on a strategy for the class. He said that the struggles were still too fragmented - that what was needed was simply strategies for these fragments. Now Cliff and SW are posing the biggest political questions, "Social Contract or socialism" ! And still we have no coherent document that outlines the changes in objects and methods of struggle that the class must turn to, nothing which shows the way from the partial, defensive, sectional, economic struggles of today towards united class wide political goals. An organisation which cannot concretely answer the question, "what is a workers solution to the crisis?" except with the bald word "socialism" will not be turned to by the best militants of the class. It will hardly hold itself together in the coming storms let alone be of any use to workers in struggle.

We need a programme to fight the programmes of Benn and the Tribunites which seem so practical to workers facing massive redundancies. We need a programme to present a workers' answer to galloping inflation and combat the Wilson and Healey recipe of a general decline in living standards. We need a programme which poses the question of workers control as a weapon of struggle not as a shackle to the system. We need to raise the question of workers' power of a workers' government

against the reformist delusions of the parliamentary road to socialism. Last but not least we have to challenge the a-political, complacent sectionalism - the trade union routinism endemic in the British labour movement, the narrow national outlook that throws the class into the arms of the bosses' secret and open agents on such issues as immigration and racialism, the Irish crisis, the Common Market, protectionism, the oppression and exploitation of women.

It is at this point that, despite the brave words about the deepening crisis, the need for socialism etc., our leadership is suddenly struck by an unusual modesty. They argue: we are a tiny organisation with no muscle and cannot affect much in the class, and therefore grand strategies are just not on the cards. Our agitation will be limited to immediate, practical tactics. Socialism is a matter for propaganda. This argument is a recipe for a reformist practice - simply urging on existing struggles, pushing for more militancy and believing that this will in itself generate a political perspective. No one should doubt that workers both in sections and a class wide basis can spontaneously generate a massive political confrontation. However to wait for such an event or to base ones actions on it would be the height of political folly.

We do not believe that any programme is a magic wand to transform us from a pumpkin into a glass coach. We do believe that to draw serious militants into our ranks we have to offer a strategy for fighting today's battles, which help them to unify and politicise the rank and file and build a mass movement openly, i.e. consciously committed to workers control, and a workers government.

We therefore present here an outline draft of the elements of such a strategy including a series of immediate, partial and transitional goals of struggle.

INTERNATIONAL BASIS OF OUR WORK

The crisis of British capitalism is an integral part of a world crisis with deepening social and political dimensions. It marks the break up of the new imperialist stability gained after the second world war. We are entering a period of sharp trade and economic conflict, a scramble for shrinking markets, international crisis, wars and revolutions. Yet never before has the workers movement been so politically unequipped to deal with such a crisis. The continued dominance of Stalinism and social democracy is obvious. What is worse the forces of the revolutionary left are splintered and fragmented. The working class internationally, desperately needs revolutionary leadership. Isolated national groupings are terribly prone to vacillation and to succumbing to the pressure of the dominant trends within the local labour movements. Events in Chile proved this once again. Any serious revolutionary group must pledge itself to fight for the recreation of a revolutionary international. Practical limited co-operation is possible now - on issues like the Common Market, Chile, the fight against re-emerging fascist forces, immigrant workers.

A task parallel to this is the forging of links between workers in struggle - whether on trade union issues where rank and file link-ups are crucial, or with solidarity work as around opposition to the Chilean junta, or support for Portuguese workers in the coming period of crisis.

An inevitable aspect of the world imperialist crisis is the continued and even intensified struggles for national liberation on the part of the most oppressed victims on the system. Support for all these movements is categorical for socialists in the imperialist countries. The South-East Asian, Southern African and Palestinian struggles must be supported if workers are to really free themselves from the crippling influence of their own bourgeoisie. These struggles also have dramatic effects on the "home country" as the Vietnam war had and can still have, in the USA, as an Arab-Israeli war over Palestine would have for the whole economic and political system, and as the Mozambique, Angola, Guinea Bissau colonial revolts had in Portugal.

For us the crucial issue in this field is the Irish situation. Unconditional support for all those fighting against British Imperialism in Ireland is a position that cannot be questioned by a revolutionary. Strict differentiation between nationalist movements, their petty-bourgeois politics and programme, and internationalist proletarian movements, is an equally important duty. Likewise for the good of the movement in Ireland and for the political clarification of British workers, criticism of the tactics of these movements is necessary. But such criticism must never be allowed to obscure or qualify our position on the side of those trying to defeat British imperialist forces and policy in Ireland. Our programme must therefore be:

(1) For the defeat of British imperialism in Ireland. Solidarity with all those forces republican and socialist fighting for this end.

(2) Unconditional release of all Irish political prisoners held in Britain and Ireland - immediate end to internment or detention.

(3) Immediate withdrawal of all British troops from Ireland.

(4) Immediate repeal of the Prevention of Terrorism Act and similar oppressive legislation.

(5) Self determination for the Irish people.

We must fight wholeheartedly to take the Irish issue into the trade unions to fight for an anti-chauvinist movement for the withdrawal of troops, to combat anti-Irish chauvinism. Using the mistaken politics of the republicans or the acts of agents provocateurs, the ruling class, the right wing labourites, and the fascist National Front can whip up fantastic waves of hostility and physical harassment towards Irish workers. They can use the popularity gained in such movements to

refurbish their flagging prestige amongst workers. Right wing labourites and National Fronters can use it to cover their capitulation to the bosses on the issues of wages and conditions. Continuous work on Ireland is the only answer. This means the present commitment to building the Troops Out Movement.

A programme for the fight-back against the developing capitalist crisis; the only effective answer to which is the establishment of workers power cannot be divorced from the fight against the present established leadership in the various working class organisations. The trade unions - the only mass organisation of the working class in Britain are weakened by the existence of a priviledged and undemocratic strata of full time officials who are thoroughly committed to the preservation of capitalism and betray, fragment or muffle any struggles of the rank and file which seriously challenge its stability. Politically the workers movement is led by a Labour Party which is politically a bourgeois party. Its connection with the working class in purely organisational terms is weak - constituency and ward labour parties are weak and getting weaker. Nevertheless the principal support and the factor which makes the Labour Party 'the party of the working man' is its alliance with the trade unions.

UNITED FRONT

The "official opposition" within the trade union bureaucracy and the Labour Party is provided by the unofficial alliance of the Tribunite M.P.'s and left bureaucrats and the CP. To fight for a revolutionary programme means to fight these tendencies in the workers movement. As revolutionaries form a tiny minority in the class compared with the active (and more importantly) passive supporters of these tendencies our challenge cannot be a bald sectarian counterposing of ourselves to them. Nor does it mean a sinking back into passive propaganda until events expose them. (After all great events - the 1918/19 revolution in Germany, the 1924, 1929/31 Labour Governments in Britain, have 'exposed' the Social Democrats - the rise to power of Hitler, the Chilean debacle have 'exposed' Stalinism). Revolutionaries should have learned by now that false leaders are only exposed to the extent to which they are replaced. This can only be done by fighting shoulder to shoulder with sections of workers who are still largely under the influence of the reformists. In a period of deepening crisis the key tactic is that of the united front.

To pursue this effectively the revolutionary group needs a clear and comprehensive programme itself. From this programmatic analysis and from its regular political and tactical perspectives it will decide the nature and direction of its intervention. Without an operative party programme united front work would be a shambles.

The basis of a united front is an urgent tactical or strategic need facing workers in which a maximum concentration of forces is necessary. As a call for united action in limited and specific goals

it includes calls on the reformist leaders as well as appeals to their rank and file. Given our size, it is unlikely to be achieved in a full inter-party agreement form in the immediate future but it may well be achieved from below in local circumstances. Even if a particular call is unsuccessful it will help convince workers that in a period of crisis, it is the revolutionaries who stand for a real fight on the most basic issues and who stand for unity. And that it is the reformists and bureaucrats who are the splitters and wreckers, unwilling to fight on the most elementary issues.

Should we achieve unity in action with groups of workers led by Labour Party or CP members, we must of course observe discipline in action for the agreed ends. We must avoid cheap organisational manoevering. Nevertheless fighting together does not mean abandoning our right and duty to criticise the policies and politics of our allies (e.g. the CP's industrial and parliamentary road strategies). If and when they seek to sell short or abandon the struggle, our position must have been made clear to their rank and file and supporters. We must be a recognisable alternative leadership for a continued fight.

THE CRISIS - THE SOCIAL CONTRACT AND INCOMES POLICY

Following the logic of its capitalist policies the Labour Party will be forced to tighten the social contract and even turn it into a formal wage freeze. This will cause enormous tensions within the Labour Party and more importantly within the bureaucracy. It may well bring down the Labour Government or cause an early election. The social contract is precarious but its de-stabilisation holds unknown terrors for all sections of the official leaders of the labour movement. Hence their policy of delay. But the longer it is put off the more explosive the conflict will become.

We must stand clearly on the slogan -
No Incomes Policy Under Capitalism.

We must call for solidarity and support for all workers fighting for claims which breach the Social Contract and oppose the special case argument.

Lastly we must put forward a series of demands which amount to a workers answer to the crisis - a programme which deals with inflation, unemployment and the measures a real workers government would take against the bosses.

GOVERNMENT AND THE LABOUR PARTY

The bosses want to use the state, the law, the police force, and Parliament to crush the unions and drive down our living standards. The working class must resist this attack. The working class also need a government which will act in their interests, which will tackle the crisis not at their expense but at the expense of the bosses whose

system causes the crisis. The workers need a government which will free the unions from all legal shackles, that will not impose a wage freeze but will seriously attack the economic power of the exploiters, which will make the bosses shoulder the cost of unemployment and inflation, which will outlaw racialism, stop the oppression of the Irish people and the oppression of women. We need a government which will disarm the bosses, anti-working class police and military forces. The Labour Party, however, on all these issues is either pursuing disguised or openly opposite (i.e. anti-working class) policies. We, in I.S. were in favour of returning a Labour Government, i.e. of workers voting labour because a Tory victory would give them a 'democratic' licence to attack the unions. However we do not believe that the Labour Party will act in the workers' interest when it is returned to power. We do not believe that the Labour Party will implement the important measures the working class needs to solve the crisis. To those workers (a vast majority of the working class) who believe that at least they can be pressurised into it we must offer a united front to do so.

On our side we must make it clear that we believe that only a revolutionary struggle for workers power (for a workers state) finally will succeed in solving even these immediate needs of workers for jobs, houses, decent wages and security. We must however be prepared to fight with those workers who believe Labour can be made to do them. This is the context in which we put 'demands on the Labour Party'. These demands are not just a list of things the Labour Party won't do and therefore will expose itself. Nor is it a list of things workers expect Labour to do. They are immediate actions the working class needs to help it meet the crisis. On the part of those workers who still have illusions in the Labour Party and whom we can draw into struggle with us around these issues - we must say ' put the Labour Party to the test in the struggle'. Fight with us for these things. Together we can build a movement which can (if you reformists are right) force the Labour Party to do them and which if it will not can be the basis of the working class doing it themselves. The programme we should put forward should be as follows.

(1) Workers must not pay for capitalism's crisis - the Labour Government must abandon all attempts at controlling wages. No Incomes Policy under capitalism.

(2) Workers must not pay for inflation - the Labour Government must:
   - (a) enforce a legal minimum wage of £40 per week, with automatic cost of living regulator.
   - (b) introduce a fixed sum increase in wages fully compensating for each one per cent increase in the cost of living of workers and their families.
   - (c) immediately introduce equal pay for women.

(3) Workers must not suffer unemployment - the Labour Government must:
   (a) Nationalise without compensation all firms declaring redundancies and recognise workers control of them.
   (b) Introduce a legal 35 hour week with no loss of earnings.
   (c) Make it legally obligatory for all employers who cannot find work for their employees to pay them full trade union rates.
   (d) Introduce a plan for useful public works under trade union control (hospitals, schools, houses, nurseries, etc., in which all 'surplus' labour could be employed).

(4) The Labour Government must tackle the real cause of economic chaos:
   (a) It must abolish 'business secrecy' and open the records of all companies to workers inspection.
   (b) It must nationalise the big banks and finance houses centralising them into one state bank subordinate to workers.
   (c) In order to restore all cuts in social expenditure it must
      (i) Cancel the ruinous interest repayments of the local authorities which affect both workers and the lower middle class.
      (ii) It must nationalise the building industry under workers' control.
   (d) It must nationalise without compensation and under workers' control the major industrial and trading monopolies.

(5) The Labour Government must repeal all remaining anti-trade union laws (or clauses in laws), fully compensate all trade unions fined under the Industrial Relations Act, enact legislation clearly protecting trade-unionists from conspiracy charges and establishing the right to picket.

(6) Disband the Special Patrol Group and the SAS and establish the legal right of the members of the police force and the armed forces to join trade unions and political organisations, have free access to their press and the right to attend meetings etc. The immediate repeal of the "anti-terrorist" legislation, and the withdrawal from NATO and all imperialist alliances.

(7) Immediately withdraw all British troops from Northern Ireland and release all political prisoners held there and in Britain.

(8) Repeal the racialist Immigration Act.

These issues we must of course take up at times of local or national elections, at political meetings, in trade union branches, at trades councils etc. Particular elements of this programme can be taken up more thoroughly with those immediately concerned with them or involved in struggle on them.

It will be an important basis for agitation in the event of the divisions in the Labour Party becoming sharper, even leading to a split or exodus of the right-wing to join the Liberals.

These demands must be taken up particularly when the 'left' fakers - the Foots, the Benns, the Heffers intervene in the class struggle. Should the left come out in opposition to harsh anti-working class policies from Wilson/Callaghan/Healey we must fight in every forum they open up for these policies as the only serious workers answer to the crisis. Obviously we will have to put emphasis on particular demands at particular times, but we must have a clear idea of the whole programme and those with whom we are fighting should understand our total answer.

The question of government and the need for government action which is really in the interests of workers will be raised by the acute financial crisis of the local authorities. The rent freezes and rate rebates have covered this up but at the same time heightened the crisis. Enormous sums are now being mortgaged to the big financiers. Huge rent and rate increases are inevitable. We must be certain that the labour movement does not lose the leadership to petit-bourgeois rate payers especially as many Labour Councils will be in the front line of resistance to tenant and rate payer militancy. As well as organisation - re-creating or revitalising tenants' associations we must have political slogans. We must demand the cancellation of debts and interest repayments of the local authorities and the nationalisation of the banks and finance houses, their concentration and control by the trade unions as the only solution to the crisis in local government. All other solutions hit the workers (and the lower middle class). We must demand that the Labour Party both at government and local level initiate a programme of house, hospital and school construction.

THE COMMON MARKET

Socialist Worker has taken the position of supporting a 'No' vote in the forthcoming referendum. This entails support, however critical, of the campaign being waged by the 'left' bureaucrats like Benn and Jones. The referendum, unlike most political issues, allows only two options: yes or no. However much Socialist Worker criticizes the little-England chauvinism of the 'left' leaders it must, in the end, line up on the same side of the referendum divide.

We believe this position to be mistaken. The 'No' campaign, however 'popular' it may appear, we believe to be a dangerous diversion for the labour movement. Why?

Because whether British capitalism is in or out of the market makes no basic difference to the attacks which the working class faces. 'In' or 'out' these are the same: unemployment, inflation, declining social services. The balance of these attacks may be slightly altered by membership or non-membership: overall the threat remains exactly

the same. The 'No' campaign is a diversion because it contributes exactly nothing to the actual struggle against the capitalist offensive.

Quite the opposite. It allows the 'left' bureaucrats (not to speak of Enoch Powell!) to spread their reformist illusions in a "sovereign British Parliament" and their chauvinistic poison about "foreign interference in Britain's affairs". All this at a time when a real fight back against the crisis is in order, when British trade-unionists urgently need to link up with European workers to wage a common fight against a common enemy.

Any diversion from this basic task must have reactionary conclusions.

Socialist Worker is aware of the chauvinism of the 'No' campaign, but has in response adopted an evasive formula. For a 'No' vote, but against chauvinism. It has trimmed an internationalist position to suit the current mood of the class.

But this will not do. The logic of the referendum will force SW to abandon its evasive position. Either the call for an 'anti' vote will become dominant and the internationalist "corrections" muted or support for the left bureaucrats will have to be ended. Either of these or irrelevancy: a compromised and unclear position.

But does this mean we must support the Market and the right-wing Labourites who are campaigning for it. Not at all. We are equally hostile to the Roy Jenkins of this world, who present an unstable capitalist alliance as "socialist internationalism" and call upon the workers to sacrifice themselves and their interests to it. But on this occasion it would be entirely wrong to believe that to support the 'lefts' will weaken the right-wing - still less advance the cause of international socialism.

The referendum represents not a struggle between the vital interests of the workers and the needs of British big business. Rather it is a dog-fight between two sections of the ruling class. Big capitalists want membership; small capitalists don't. That is why the referendum has split both major political parties. Big and small capitalism find their supperters in both Labour and Tory parties.

To ask the workers to line up behind either side will advance the struggle against the crisis, and for socialism, not one iota.

In or out of the Market the vital interests of the workers lie in the fight back against unemployment and inflation - hand in hand with our European brothers. I.S. should therefore abstain on the referendum.

But abstention does not mean inactivity. The campaign can be used to agitate for an internationalist class programme against the crisis, fought for under the following slogans:

"In or Out the workers have to fight"
"No to the bosses referendum"
"Yes to international trade-union links"

I.S. should seek to organise:

(1) International combine and rank and file link ups and meetings.

(2) A serious conference of all our fraternal organisations throughout Europe to discuss joint work and programmatic differences in the immediate period.

INFLATION

Running at 20% per year no one can seriously deny the chronic effects of inflation. We have made it clear that we disagree with the organisations answer of 30% wage claims alone. Against this we propose automatic lump sum increases on the basis of workers cost of living index. Inflation is the product of capitalism; workers, their families and the old age pensioners should not pay for it. A rising scale of wages (and welfare benefits and pensions) tied to a monthly workers cost of living index is what we should fight for.

It is often objected who will work out the cost of living index - will that not hand us over to the statisticians and bureaucrats? In fact any shop stewards committee calculating the size of their claim already has to work out how far the cost of living has risen and work out the effects of tax. Secondly, the Rank and File movement should be persuaded to set up an ad-hoc index to demonstrate the real increase in the cost of living. This the government's phoney figures can be exposed. Thirdly, the TUC should be pressurised to set up an index, calculated openly and subject to rank and file inspection. In the interim the immediate demand for £1 for one per cent increase in the present index with the right of renegotiation on the basis of our index as soon as possible, should be adopted.

In leading sectors, miners and engineers particularly, this demand should be raised for themselves and for the class as a whole as well as for pension and welfare receivers. This must be counterposed to all indexing and thresholds and used to expose them as swindles designed to lower real income. It does not replace struggles by big sections to raise their levels, or of those who have fallen behind - it does not replace the fight for equal pay or to erase differentials.

A total programme against the onslaught on workers living standards is as follows:

(1) The working class must not pay for inflation, the bosses must pay for the crisis.

(2) We need a national Rank and File movement based in every union and workplace to fight for the following:-

(a) A rising scale of wages (pensions and welfare benefits), automatic lump sum increases to compensate absolutely for every 1% rise in a workers cost of living index.

(b) For a national minimum wage of £40 a week and the raising of all pensions and welfare benefits to this level plus cost of living regulator (as above).

(c) Immediate actions by workers against firms hoarding commodities for speculation or raising prices to increase profits.

(d) The abolition of business secrecy - open the books to the workers and their delegated representatives.

We fight against

(e) All incomes policy under capitalism, for the right of all workers to pursue their own claims and parity struggles free from all legal shackles.

(f) All threshold and indexing schemes.

None of these demands are a bald alternative to present wage battles. They must be raised alongside existing claims and demands, they must be raised in sectional as well as national claims. In particular they present the basis of a real resistance to thresholds, which otherwise will seem very attractive to increasingly large sections of workers.

UNEMPLOYMENT

Unemployment is a scourge not only to the million and more workers and their families who directly feel its effects. Even the prospect of unemployment on a massive scale is used to propaganda effect by Labour Ministers like Healey and union bureaucrats like Jones. Their aim is to persuade workers to suffer cuts in their real living standards rather than total unemployment. It is a choice of a slow or a quick death. It is a choice workers must refuse to make. The Labour politicians wish to use the threat of unemployment to maintain a voluntary incomes policy and to force up the productivity of each worker. They are prepared to tolerate present (and increasing) rates of unemployment to give this 'persuasion' credibility. A large section of bosses are backing this policy. Another considerable grouping of bosses and Tory politicians (Thatcher, Joseph, Powell et al), have no faith that this policy will be successful enough in driving down real wages and boosting profit rates. They wish to use massive unemployment to weaken the unions to the level of non-resistance. To create a pool of unemployed big enough to intimidate the employed and to set sections of workers one against the other. Both policies spell disaster for the working class, for one will lead on to the other as the crisis deepens. Organisation confused and weakened under Labour policies will be easy meat for the Tories. Therefore any programme against unemployment and redundancies must be linked closely to the

general question of a workers answer to the crisis. It must start from the position - unemployment is caused by the anarchy of the bosses system - the workers must not pay for it. To the passive and conservative trade union slogan "last in, first out", we counterpose the demands:-

(1) No redundancy - work or maintenance at full trade union rates.

(2) No productivity deals.

(3) T.U. control of overtime. A 35 hour week.

(4) No closures - nationalisation with no compensation. Workers control of production, of hiring and firing, speed and intensity, length of the working day, abolition of business secrecy, all records, boards and committees open to workers inspection.

(5) No differential or unequal treatment of women or immigrant workers - we must defend the woman's right to work and equal pay now.

(6) A plan of socially useful public works under workers' control.

(7) National minimum wage of £40 a week.

In each and every redundancy struggle, at every attempted closure we must fight to build a movement that can win these aims. Trade union control of overtime must be organised and overtime banned if redundancies are announced. Linked to this we must campaign for a minimum national wage with cost of living regulator to lay the basis for a campaign against overtime. Only this would make a ban possible in industries facing massive layoffs. We must argue for the immediate introduction of a 35 hour week with no cut in pay to create more jobs. We must argue for the most effective tactics in this fight - the factory occupation and the sit in strike. Combine committees and local Rank and File committees are particularly important. We must not neglect the task of building solidarity with factory occupations - in the working class community, housing estates etc., as well as in the Trade Unions. In the event of a wave of occupations we must push for a co-ordinated TU campaign against unemployment. This campaign must attempt to draw in those who are already unemployed - to keep them members of the trade unions or re-integrate them. Young workers, immigrant and women workers must not be lost to the TU movement through unemployment, and allowed to become the victims or dupes of the new para-fascist rabble.

Women workers are traditionally the section of the workforce where unemployment hits first. Also this is seldom realised as many women do not register as unemployed. TU's must defend the right of women to work. Women workers have been traditionally poorly paid and

badly organised, less politically conscious than men. On the other hand they are sometimes capable of great 'spontaneous' outbursts of a militancy few male workers could be capable of, e.g. the Leeds clothing workers and many of the threshold battles demonstrated this. On the other hand we have cases of women workers returning pay increases or harassing strikers. Because women workers are so weakly organised on a permanent basis they are extremely volatile. Women driven out of industry with little or no support from the trade unions would be a force for reaction. To avoid splits in the ranks and to create a new fighting unity we must reject the 'solution' of sacking women workers first. We must give redoubled energy to the cause of equal pay, pointing out the necessity of the woman's wages to the working class budget. If regrading is used as a weapon to con women into the same old low pay we must fight all such schemes and demand union and shop floor control of job regrading.

The central issue which massive closures face the workers with is the continuation of production. It is also raised by redundances on any considerable scale. The factory occupation key tactic raises the question of who controls the factory. At least temporarily it vests this control in the hands of the workers direct representatives, the shop stewards committee or an ad-hoc strike/occupation committee. It should mobilise the workers in regular mass meetings.

This situation presents workers with the dilemma of how to ensure the jobs - in individual cases 'benevolent' businessmen may emerge offering to re-start production, the government might step in with a loan or sponsor a 'workers co-operative'. These solutions are possible in small companies (and in very small numbers). They are utopian illusions when looked to in a crisis and by workers in massive industries. The only real solution is one which challenges the very basis of capitalist production and control.

We must fight for nationalisation of firms and entire industries which declare redundancies. But this is not enough. We must oppose all attempts to bail out bankrupt exploiters out of taxation. To compensate them for their failure would be the height of folly. We must argue for full nationalisation with no compensation. Moreover we do not want nationalised industries under the control of a state which runs them for the bosses benefit - as the mines and the railways are at present subordinated to the needs of the profit system. Our demand therefore is:

NATIONALISATION WITHOUT COMPENSATION UNDER WORKERS CONTROL.

We must argue forcibly for this against all 'more practical' solutions like Benn nationalisation, government hand outs and workers co-operatives. We must say clearly that these are no solution but recipes for many workers losing their jobs and for the weakening and compromising of the shop floor organisation.

Much confusion exists around the term 'workers control' - a confusion which the proponents of fake 'workers participation' schemes take advantage of. To oppose these schemes for involving the workers in their own exploitation we must be clear what we mean.

Workers control means more than slowly encroaching on management 'rights' - every good trade unionist tries to do this every day in the defence and furtherance of his members' pay and conditions. But it is not something that belongs only to the socialist future when workers will take over complete management of all aspects of a centrally planned economy. At the moment it is impossible for workers to immediately take over all technical and specialised jobs in production. Even when the working class has seized power this will not be immediately possible; it will take time to train a new generation of workers for these jobs and break out of the system which treats workers as less than human.

Workers control forms a link between the trade union struggle and workers power. Strong rank and file trade unions can win control over different aspects of industry: working conditions, speed of working, overtime and the hiring and firing of labour. Workers can supervise and regulate production by winning a workers veto over management decisions.

Such a situation could not be stable. A nationalised industry would continually raise the question of 'who rules'? Either the working class would have to extend its control to the whole of society by taking state power in a revolutionary way or it would have to back down before the bosses.

This is the context in which we should raise this demand. Workers control is a weapon of struggle, challenging the capitalists right to rule in the factory - in the sphere of production it inevitably raises the question of which class rules in society in general. Our task in the coming period is to popularise this form of struggle, raising it in every struggle against unemployment and preparing the working class to take power. To do this means forcing an entry into the sacred realm of bourgeois secrecy. At a time of economic crisis it must be argued that workers in order to defend their jobs, must know their firms. We must raise the demand 'OPEN THE BOOKS'. All business secrets of the bosses must be placed under regular inspection by workers representatives. We must also demand the opening of all boards and committees to workers representatives - not to sit on them as directors bound by any collective responsibility to 'management', but as workers' inspectors - to observe, enquire and report back to mass meetings and stewards committees. The secret price fixing between the monopolies, backdoor state handouts, tax evasion, and the many other swindles the bosses practice on working people must be exposed. Our aim is not to discover excuses for the individual bankrupt capitalist - these figures will be made readily available - but rather to discover the secret workings of the profit system which subjects workers lives to the anarchy of competition.

In this situation of massive unemployment we must demand the resumption of production and its adaptation to socially useful ends. A plan of useful public works under workers control - no building workers should be unemployed while there is a chronic shortage of houses, schools, hospitals and nurseries.

WOMEN AND THE CRISIS

In order to transform Women's Voice into a campaigning and agitational paper it is necessary that the paper has a clear programme. Only on the basis of the fight for components of that programme can we build roots for the paper - for example, Women's Voice groups. We propose the following programme for Women's Voice in the immediate future.

(a) Equal pay and regrading

(b) The right for women to work, to be campaigned for by women and men.

(c) Equal opportunities for apprenticeship and retraining.

(d) Job and promotion opportunities.

(e) The provision of work place creches, only where they can be controlled by the trade unions.

It must also include demands which facilitate the above, when and only when it is clear these are linked to a class analysis.

(f) Force the unions to take up the minimum wage for all workers including women.

(g) Unions to embark on a unionisation campaign for women especially in low paid industries.

(h) Women's caucuses in unions.

(i) Meetings arranged in unions at times when women can attend.

(j) Women to be given the ability and confidence to be shop stewards and take positions on Trade Councils, this requires the encouragement and not discouragement of women's full participation in the unions.

Added to these demands on the government and the unions, the programme should include demands addressed to wider problems women in general are faced with:

(k) Educational opportunities and equal opportunities in all spheres of life.

(l) Contraception and abortion on demand.

(m) 24 hour nurseries.

(n) Support for all those fighting against rent and price increases.

(o) The need for improved social services, especially those related to the family and women, e.g. the medical profession should take women's problems seriously and recognise women's rights to control their own bodies.

We think that such a programme would be indispensable to 'Womans Voice' for initiating campaigns and local action. The organisation must commit itself to building support for Women's Voice in all areas of our work. We think Women's Voice groups should be built around the paper in particular circumstances. They should not be seen however as a blueprint for every struggle that occurs.

THE RANK AND FILE MOVEMENT

The trade unions are the sole organs for the self defence of the class at the moment. They are weakened in their effectiveness by the TU leaders bureaucratic control, by their policy of class collaboration and by their sabotaging of genuine rank and file initiative. The heritage of hostility to 'politics' on the shop floor and traditional craft and sectional divisions strengthen the grip of the TU bureaucracy.

A three-fold struggle must be waged for the total independence of the TUs from the state machine, for a militant political class unifying strategy and for the transformation of the unions into democratic fighting bodies. To do this a rank and file movement within the TUs is necessary. Its tasks will be to win over and link up the shop stewards committees, the combine committees, the district committees, the Trades Councils. In many cases this will require a real transformation of these bodies.

Such a movement must exist at local, union and national level. No such rank and file movement can be built. There can be no short cut to building a national organisation unless we develop our roots and base in the particular unions and industries.

Our starting point must be the particular sectional and local rank and file initiatives. We must build caucuses of militants grouped around Rank and File papers in each industry. If these papers are to be more than useful 'information swoppers' they must be built around a clear and specific programme for the industry or union. The programme must be the banner of the rank and file groups, the demands by which it is known and recognised. The production of national newspapers is meaningless unless it is the result of a solid base of support for our programme. A regular shop stewards committee bulletin can often mean more in reality than a nationally produced paper written by a handful of I.S. members (the experience of many of the rank and file

papers has taught us this). The building of rank and file groups on a clear platform of union democracy and particular economic demands must be the starting point of any rank and file movement.

But our perspective must go beyond sectional rank and file movements. Our aim is to build a genuine cross industry rank and file leadership. We are not merely out, as many leading members still suggest, to build a periphery for our own organisation.

No national rank and file movement can be built on the basis of centrally directed initiatives alone. It must be built around a clear alternative perspective to that of the trade union bureaucracy on the key issues facing workers. Regular democratic conferences would have to thrash out these positions as any movement which reflects the real movement will have many differing positions. It is crucial that CP and LP influenced militants must be brought into the movement. Only on this basis can the rank and file develop a life of its own.

The national organisation must fight for:

(1) Generalised economic demands: the minimum wage, equal pay, work or full pay, support and solidarity action etc.

(2) Demands relating to the role and structure of the national trade unions ..... for democratisation, against collaboration etc.

(3) Key social demands of the class, e.g. housing, welfare, against racial and sexual oppression.

We do not seek to impose a comprehensive revolutionary programme on the rank and file movement We must seek to argue our positions within the movement, which will be composed both of revolutionary and reformist workers.

We consider the building of such a movement at local and national level to be a major task at present. The Leyland crisis has seen the shop stewards pushed to the centre of the political arena. Benn's policies of incorporation will strengthen that tendency. The battle for an independent rank and file leadership becomes more and more urgent.

We do not think the history of I.S. involvement with the rank and file movement has been consistent or clear.

(1) There still exists little clarity in the organisation as to the role and purpose of the rank and file movement. Amongst sections of the leadership there is a tendency to see it as a halfway house between the class and the party.

Some see it as a formalised periphery which will merge with I.S. at a time of heightened crisis.

(2) This has led to excessive organisational I.S. control of the rank and file movement at the top.

(3) While the Rank and File organising committee has produced many good ideas and initiatives - Chile, women, racism and safety, for example - these have all been undertaken without an overall perspective for building the rank and file as an ongoing movement at national and local level. The confused history of our attitude to the LCDTU is an example of the lack of consistent perspective and guidance. At one time we are called on to oppose delegations to the LCDTU, to argue against support. Now we are called on to secure delegations, to argue yet another position in our branches. We consider that the early decision against a national bulletin for the R & F was a mistake. Such positions have led to an inability to generate a genuine existence for the movement between conference.

This can only be rectified by a clear and open discussion within the organisation. We think the R & F can only be built at local and national level. Experience in these campaigns should be transmitted to all involved groups via a national newsletter.

The National Rank and File must initiate policies and campaigns that can be the basis for sectional and local action. In particular we think the Rank and File should begin to develop its own cost of living index as part of the fight against thresholds and indexing and for a rising scale of wages. Rank and file groupings could then use this index as the basis for wage agitation and organisation.

To date the R & F has functioned quite successfully as a support organisation for strikes etc. The R & F can only grow if it can initiate struggles involving broad sections of workers against the ruling class attack. In this context local committees on particular issues must be encouraged, as well as the formation of combine committees. These will take several forms - transformed Trades Councils, Public Sector Alliances, Anti-Fascist groups, for example - but events in Glasgow highlight their importance. It is crucial that all members see their shop stewards committee or Trades Council as a potential component of the national rank and file movement.

Unless we move to develop the local and sectional groups of the Rank and File on the basis of a campaigning offensive there is a danger that the Rank and File will become an ever more remote central organisation more and more divorced from the shop floor - and more and more a mere front for I.S.

Such a policy to activate and develop the Rank and File can only come as the result of an open perspectives discussion within own organisation.

The crisis of capitalism opens up enormous opportunities for revolutionary socialists. But we will not build by tailing the militancy of the class alone, nor by repeatedly calling for socialism. We need a clear alternative both to the crisis of capitalism and to the crisis of perspective within the labour movement.

This document has sought to present such an alternative. It has argued the alternatives that revolutionaries should pose to capitalist crisis, and the new forms of struggle that we should argue for. It provides the basis not only of winning workers directly to our politics and organisation, but also of working alongside ever broader numbers of workers and proving our politics and ability to lead in practice.

But no such programme is an alternative to building a base for the organisation in the work places, factories and unions. The job of revolutionaries is not to endlessly recite the 'correct' alternative. Our base must be built through effective day to day leadership and an ability to link immediate struggles with our alternative political programme.

A programme does however

(1) Provide the basis for our political leadership in the factories and unions. It outlines the answer and perspective which revolutionaries offer to the class.

(2) Ensure that the organisation marches as one. Such situations as the different regional responses to the Birmingham bombings or other regional and sectional differences within the organisation can only be overcome if we have a clear political line as a national organisation.

A clear workers answer to the crisis would inform the activity of the organisation at all levels. It would tie together the perspectives and activity of all work groups. It would provide the basis for the agitation and propaganda of Socialist Worker.

No such programme can fall out of the skies. Only the experience of the organisation as a whole could develop such a clear alternative. That is why we submit this document to debate inside the organisation. That is why we call on the leadership to reply to our position.

But if I.S. is to develop a clear alternative for the working class movement the nature of our internal life must change. Democratic centralism is not about the circulation of minutes as some formalists claim. It is about a leadership taking its political perspectives openly to the membership. It is about the membership testing those perspectives against experience and struggle. Only on that basis can the line of the organisation be refined and developed.

Such an internal life does not exist in I.S. at present. If the organisation is to meet the tests ahead the coming conference must ensure that I.S. has a clear alternative programme for the working class movement and that full democratic centralist debate is restored within the organisation. If the conference cannot fulfill those tasks, it cannot solve the problems faced by the organisation.

The undersigned agree with the general political line of this Left Platform, those marked * dissenting on the Common Market section.

Dave Silcock	Reading	Stuart King	North Lambeth
Steve Pitt		Robin Camacho	
Ros Makin		Jenny Norris	
Rob Watler			
		Bill Ford *	Edinburgh
Steve McSweeney	Newham		
Mike Foley *		Dave Hughes	Leicester
Dave Ward	Crawley	Juliet Ash	Hackney
Pat Collins		Dick Pratt	Warley
Pat Owen		Michelle Ryan	
John Owen		Sue Thomas	
Janet Richardson		Malcolm Woodhall	
Keith Richardson			
		Dave Stocking	Wolverhampton
Mike Lee	Nottingham		
Mary Fraser		Steve Cushion	
Steve Abbot		Rachel Needham	Stoke
Pete Keenlyside *	Cardiff	Neil Bedford	
		John Walklate	
Maureen O'brien	Cricklewood	Dave Perkin	
Bernie McAdam	Harrow	Janet Geary	Brighton
Arnie Prout		Barry Pavier	
		Ned Chapman	
Jenny Taylor	Leeds	Colin Knowles	
Sybil Knowles		L. Waterman	

The signatories are willing to speak to I.S. Branches or Districts on the political perspectives put forward in this document. We invite all those who are in general agreement with this left platform to sign and fight for this programme in the organisation. Those wishing to sign, or wanting documents, speakers etc., should contact

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A national meeting is planned by the supporters of this platform to be held in London in early May. All IS members who wish to discuss the political positions put forward in this document, whether in agreement or not, are invited to attend. Details from above address.