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A REPLY TO A. MITCHELL

THE SLL & IRISH TROTSKYISM

TRANSITIONAL DEMANDS
& LABOUR'S PROGRAMME

PULLETT NO. 3

A DISCUSSION DOCUMENT

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This 'Bulletin', number 3 in the series, continues the work of fighting to return the Workers' Revolutionary Party - Socialist Labour League, to the road of Trotskyism.

For twenty years the SLL alone in Britain has fought for Trotskyist politics and especially against the Fabloite revisionism of the 'Militant' and International Marxist groups.

For most of this time the SLL worked as a leading section of the International Committee, fighting for the rebuilding of the Fourth International, destroyed as a unified International in 1951-53 systematically.

Until 1964 the Trotskyists worked in the Labour Party and especially in its youth movements. Through this activity many campaigns against reformist politics were initiated and leading worker militants won to Trotskyism.

However, since 1964, and especially since 1969-70, the SLL-WRF has abandoned first its work in the Labour Party, and then its consistent fight for the Transitional Programme.

Since the split in the ICFI in 1971, which the SLL bureaucratically organised in order to avoid international discussion, primarily with the OCI, the SLL has turned away from internationalism.

In Britain the policies swing wildly, and increasingly more frequently, from left to right, posing many of the problems crucial to revolutionaries - the United Front, the nature of the Labour Party, the tactic of entrism, the economic crises and the nature of trade unions.

The most important events in the working class movement in post-war Europe - May-June 1968, Czechoslovakia, were hardly analysed by the SLL leaders. Since then international work has been greatly neglected.

The discussion, abandoned by the SLL-WRF, has been continued by the Organising Committee for the Reconstruction of the Fourth International since 1971, and in its work internationally. One of the functions of this Bulletin is to give voice to the politics of the OCRI to members of the WRF. The international discussion must be re-opened, at leadership level, publicly and without delay.

The other function of the Bulletin is to present clearly the contradictory development of the SLL-WRF, and to analyse its perspectives, actions and statements as part of the history of the Fourth International.

We are not stepping outside of the tradition of the SLL in any sense, we want to reclaim its Trotskyist core in order to answer the urgent problems facing the British workers' movement.

Our columns are open to all constructive contributions from members of the WRF.

The Bulletin will now appear monthly and is for distribution to WRF members only.

EDITORIAL

Nearly two months after the publication of our first bulletin which lifted the veil on the developing crisis in the WRF and the party's rapid descent into liquidationism and middle class radicalism, Workers Press has 'replied' on its front page in the issue of 25th March. The response, for reply is too strong a word to describe it, has been provoked by the discussions currently taking place among WRF members who have read, photostated and circulated both the first and second bulletins. We now learn that WRF members have been instructed on no account to discuss with supporters of the bulletin, and to cease reproducing it. These bureaucratic commands can only come from a leadership which fears a genuine political exchange with its critics. This contrasts starkly with the WRF's readiness to appear on the same platform as Tories and to debate political issues with the direct representatives of the class enemy, as they did at Dumbarton, Swindon and elsewhere during the election.

Renegades

The designation selected for us is that of 'renegades'. In the Marxist vocabulary this word is reserved for those who have betrayed the basic principles of Marxism. Such a charge is serious indeed and must be substantiated with great care and precision. When Lenin denounced Kautsky as a renegade, this charge was established through painstaking analysis of the theoretical writings of Kautsky ('The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky'). The WRF are forced to use another method. And this is because they themselves are in the process of reneging on Trotskyism. Thus they abandon the long-established Marxist tradition of principled, exhaustive polemic, the method we ourselves attempted to employ in tentative first steps towards an understanding of a critical stage reached in the degeneration of British Trotskyism. Nowhere in the reply are there any quotations from our carefully annotated documents. Instead, the lying allegation that 'the renegades ... want to equate the strength of the working class with the Labour and trade union bureaucracy'. No cited text! Instead an insinuation that the 'renegades' are capitulating to bureaucracy and, apparently, arguing that 'we should support Labour's minimum programme and keep quiet about nationalisation.' Again, nowhere a cited text! These methods of polemic are alien to Trotskyism. We can only assume that the author is referring to Bulletin No. 2, a publication whose existence he fails even to acknowledge! In this document we discuss in some detail the issue of nationalisation. Far from keeping quiet' about it the document actually outlines a tactic and strategy for the campaign for nationalisation inside the working class movement. More than half this section consists of extracts from the Transitional Programme, where it deals with workers' control as one of the preparatory steps towards nationalisation and the planned economy.

Nationalisation

Bulletin 2 contrasted Trotsky's approach to nationalisation to that of the WRF, which consists of the ritual chanting of the need to nationalise at a stroke, without compensation and under workers' control, the entire economy, irrespective of the level of understanding of the class and whether or not it agrees with such a proposal, and without any of the necessary preparatory measures outlined by Trotsky in the Transitional Programme - 'Abolition of Business Secrets', 'Workers Control', the formulation of a national economic plan before the final expropriation. These preparatory steps are of

no interest to the WRF for they have no intention of preparing the working class for power. Indeed they complain in the same article that Labour's minimum programme is 'totally inadequate' but they say they will support it. Let us get a few things straight. We, the authors of the document, have at no time gone as far as Mitchell in saying that we 'support' the minimum programme. We said 'the entire strength of the workers movement must be mobilised to implement the Shadow Cabinets statements ... For a Labour government with no Coalitions to fight on its programme! Contrast our position of taking the minimum programme as a lever to develop a mass movement 'which alone can provide the impetus for such a qualitative development' as the exposure of the reformists, to Mitchell who miserably tail-ends the reformists by supporting the minimum programme whilst complaining bitterly that it is totally (sic!) inadequate. No communist can under any circumstances support the minimum programme. What we support and develop is the mass movement, the 'rope', as Lenin said, that 'supports' the social democratic leaders' necks. Here are the two positions clear for all to see. The one complaining of the 'inadequacy' of the social democrats reforms; the other seeing in the minimum programme of social democracy one of the means whereby social democracy's grip can be broken. And notably absent from the first - the mass movement. In the next breath, having said he 'supports' the minimum programme of the Labour government despite its 'total inadequacy' (!) he announces that for the lifetime of this parliament Wilson has abandoned all nationalisation proposals.

North Sea Oil

But included in the minimum programme was precisely the demand for nationalisation of North Sea Oil, Insurance and Land for building! What does Mitchell mean therefore by 'inadequate'? He means inadequate in terms of achieving socialism! We must assume then he still harbours illusions in the parliamentary road to socialism, for surely on that score the programme is 'totally inadequate'. Mitchell wants an adequate Labour programme which will achieve socialism. That is why his party is calling for a recall Labour Party conference!

But if it is true as the WRF says that the economic basis of reformism has been undermined, then reformism will be unable (indeed are unable) to implement even its own programme. By evading the task of mobilising the mass movement to compel Labour to implement this programme the WRF lets the reformists off the hook! Instead it indulges in left rhetoric about the maximum programme in the pathetic delusion that it has 'exposed' the labour leaders for the umpteenth time. At this point we arrive at the first of Mitchell's quotations, selected especially for the purpose of substantiating the charge of renegacy. It is from an article by Lenin written in June 1906 - 'Once Again about the Duma Cabinet'. The reader is led to suppose, since no attempt is made by Mitchell to suggest otherwise, that Lenin and the Bolsheviks confronted a similar situation in the Russia of 1906 to the WRF and the working class movement in Britain today, namely the recent formation of a social democratic, reformist government in a country where the struggle for socialism is posed by the deepening crisis of capitalism.

Duma

Mitchell writes that 'Lenin had to meet the same snivelling attack during the struggle to build the Bolshevik Party against all forms of reformism to take power in 1917'. Not a word from Mitchell that in 1906 Russia was in the midst of a revolutionary crisis and that during the course of the previous year, had thrown up the Soviets,

and created a state of dual power, a situation in which to press reform demands on a cabinet subservient to the autocracy was nakedly counter-revolutionary. Does Mitchell really believe that (a) Britain is in the throes of a similar revolutionary crisis, with workers' Soviets (councils) challenging the bourgeoisie for state power? (b) does he really believe that the type of state power that existed in Russia in 1906 and in the Duma cabinet especially, is in any sense similar to the state power in Britain and the present Labour government? (c) finally, is he aware that the demands for which the Bolsheviki were pressing at this time were not those of the socialist revolution, but of the bourgeois democratic revolution - principally the constituent assembly, the nationalisation of the land and the 8-hour working day? For decades now Stalinists have sought to pervert the essence of Lenin's writings on the question of the bourgeois revolution in Russia to make it appear that Lenin was an ardent advocate of the fight for bourgeois democracy in the advanced imperialist states where the task posed was that of its overthrow by proletarian revolution. Lenin's writings have thus been used to justify popular frontism by being taken out of their historical and political context. Now we find Mitchell playing the same reactionary game. For when we come to the quotation itself, we find that Lenin is saying a great deal more than Mitchell would have NE readers suppose.

Reforms

He cites the passage where Lenin, after summarising the arguments of the reformists ('we must fight for small but achievable things ... these small things will facilitate the fight for big ones ...') says: 'To what conclusion does this argument inevitably lead? To the conclusion that we need no revolutionary programme, no revolutionary party, and no revolutionary tactics. What we need are reforms, nothing more'. The incompleteness of this quotation could lead one to suppose, and perhaps this is Mitchell's intention, that Lenin was opposed to the struggle for reforms. On the contrary, the target of this attack (and remember, it was written in a period of revolutionary class struggle and violent class battles) was the bourgeois liberals and their supporters on the opportunist wing of the Russian workers' movement who sought to limit the struggle of the proletariat to reforms achievable within the framework of Tsarist Russia. They were putting forward demands that dragged down the level of consciousness of the working class, a level which over the previous year, had led to the formation of the Soviet movement. Is Mitchell claiming that our demand that Labour must be made by the mass workers' movement to carry out its own programme (a programme which Mitchell himself says he 'supports'!) is comparable in any way to the policy of the Russian bourgeois Liberals and opportunists? As Mitchell well knows, the mobilisation of the working class in its trade unions and the Labour Party in such a struggle would not drag down the consciousness of the working class, but thrust it forwards and upwards. It would create the impetus necessary within the class for the clash with the bureaucracy, as the reformist leaders retreat from their programme under the pressure of British and World capitalism.

Revolutionaries and Reforms

Let us return to Lenin's article, that portion of which was omitted by Mitchell, for reasons that will become immediately apparent: '... the advanced class must pursue independent revolutionary tactics. We shall never reduce our tasks to that of supporting the slogan of the reformist bourgeoisie that are most in vogue. We

pursue an independent policy and put forward only such reforms as are undoubtedly favourable to the interests of the revolutionary struggle, that undoubtedly enhance the independence, class consciousness and fighting efficiency of the proletariat ... Only by such tactics can real progress be achieved in the matter of important reforms. This may sound paradoxical, but its truth is confirmed by the whole history of the international social democratic movement. Reformist tactics are the least likely to secure real reforms. The most effective way to secure real reforms is to pursue the tactics of the revolutionary class struggle. (emphasis added)

Vanguard

We ask not only Mitchell but all WRP members - would they deny that the repeal of the Industrial Relations Act, the Housing Finance Act, and extension of the right of picketing proposed by Foot, the repeal of the Counter Inflation Act, and on an international level, the banning of arms sales and aid to the Chilean military junta fulfil precisely those conditions laid down by Lenin - namely that they 'enhance the independence, class consciousness and fighting efficiency of the proletariat'? Mitchell apparently would, for he finds them 'totally inadequate'. But for millions of workers they will be seen, and to an extent correctly, as means of developing their struggle against the employers. It is therefore the revolutionary duty of communists, not to 'support' these Labour proposals (as does Mitchell, the would-be 'smasher' of reformism) but to secure the maximum possible mobilisation of the working class for them while all the time maintaining the political, programmatic and organizational independence of the vanguard. Like all petty bourgeois radicals, Mitchell is afraid to become involved in such a struggle for fear it might compromise his revolutionary credentials. By abstaining from the struggle of the workers to make their leaders carry out the pledges on which they were elected, Mitchell does in fact abstain. The working class has no time for abstentionists. Mitchell's 'reply' is all the more reprehensible in that he seeks to justify the abstentionism of the WRP by invoking the authority of Lenin, who denounced this attitude in his Left Wing Communism (a work incidentally, written with imperialist Britain especially in mind): 'It is true that the Hendersons, the Clyneses, the Macdonalds are hopelessly reactionary. It is equally true that they want to assume power (though would prefer a coalition with the bourgeoisie), that they want to rule along the old lines, and that when they are in power they certainly will behave like the Scheidemanns and Noskes. All that is true'. The WRP never gets beyond this general truth to the concrete truth that Lenin now outlines ... 'But it does not at all follow that to support them means treachery to the revolution; what does follow is that, in the interests of the revolution, working class revolutionaries should give these gentlemen a certain amount of support'. Not, however, support for the reformists' policies, which Mitchell recommends.

Leftism

Lenin then cites a classic instance of 'infantile leftism' which, were not Mitchell forewarned of its origin, would have had him nodding his head in enthusiastic approval for its intransigent opposition to reforms and reformism: 'The Communist Party must not compromise ... The Communist Party must keep its doctrine pure, and its independence of reformism inviolate, its mission is to lead the way, without stopping or turning, by the direct road to the communist revolution.' These are the words of Sylvia Pankhurst!

Such is the road chosen for the WRF by its sectarian leaders. It leads into the political wilderness, and eventually, as is the fate of all sectarians, either to impotence in the face of great events, or a liquidationist collapse into the same reformism from which it now recoils in fear. Evidence of both these tendencies are already visible in the WRF (its abstention from the fight to install the Labour government on 1-2 March, and Healy's 500 MP's speech, 'nipping in the bud' a military coup by Acts of Parliament).

WRF Revising Theory of Bureaucracy

Equally disturbing is the WRF's first steps along the road of revising Trotsky's theory of bureaucracy. Mitchell offers another quotation to back up his flimsy case of renegacy, taken from Trotsky's 'The Class Nature of the Soviet State'. Here the intuitive, eclectic and therefore subjective idealist method of Healy betrays itself. Healy - whom we have good reason to suspect, was as much responsible for this article as Mitchell - is anxious to prove that the 'renegades' 'equate the strength of the working class with the Labour and trade union bureaucracy'. He therefore skimps through the works of Trotsky to find a quotation that seems to serve his purpose, which is to prove that the reformist bureaucracy is fused irrevocably with the capitalist class and its state. Thus Mitchell quotes as follows: 'The existence of a bureaucracy in all its variety of forms and differences in specific weight, characterises every class regime. Its power is of a reflected character. The bureaucracy is indissolubly bound up with a ruling economic class, feeding itself upon the social roots of the latter, maintaining itself and falling with it.' At this point, confusion gives way to what can only be duplicity. For the bureaucracy Trotsky is here discussing in this truncated excerpt is the technical-state bureaucracy of any class regime. He in fact lists these different classes, forms of society and modes of production that throw up their own administrative bureaucracy: 'Each class (the feudal, nobility, the peasantry, the petty bourgeoisie, the capitalist bourgeoisie, and the proletariat) works out its own special forms of property. The bureaucracy lacks all these social traits. It has no independent property roots. Its functions relate basically to the political technique of class rule'.

Wrong 'bureaucracy'

Then the excerpt selected by Mitchell begins '... The existence of a bureaucracy in all its forms ...' Thus when Trotsky says the bourgeoisie generates its own bureaucracy, he is referring to the civil service, the judiciary, the police and military caste, etc. etc., and not the labour bureaucracy generated by the working class in the imperialist epoch. Likewise with feudalism where the bureaucracy possessed a strongly clerical character and nourished itself on the exploitation of the peasantry, suffering either destruction or severe mutilation at the hands of the bourgeois revolution. That Trotsky is writing about this aspect and function of bureaucracy should be clear to the politically literate when he goes on to polemicise against the theoreticians of 'state capitalism' (Laurat, Urbahn, Souvarine etc.), who argued that the Soviet bureaucracy had separated itself completely from the proletariat and established itself as a new, 'state capitalist' ruling class. Trotsky refused to yield up the conquests of the October Revolution to these petty-bourgeois impressionists. The Soviet bureaucracy, he said, 'devours, wastes and embezzles a considerable portion of the national income. Its management costs the proletariat very dearly. In the Soviet society it occupies an extremely privileged position not only in the sense

of having political and administrative prerogatives but also in the sense of possessing enormous material advantages. Still, the biggest apartments, the juiciest steaks and even Rolls Royces are not enough to transform the bureaucracy into an independent ruling class.

Soviet Bureaucracy and Labour Bureaucracy

When Mitchell says that the WRF 'sets out to separate the working class from the bureaucracy', and declares that bureaucracy is 'a class question', and then seeks to back up his arguments with Trotsky's analysis of the Soviet bureaucracy, he perverts Trotskyism only for the benefit of its enemies, especially the state capitalists. For what does Trotsky say on this question of the 'separation' of the Soviet bureaucracy (for that is the bureaucracy Trotsky is writing about, not the Labour and trade union bureaucracy in Britain, which is not a state bureaucracy) from the working class? The further unhindered development of (Soviet) bureaucratism must lead inevitably to the cessation of economic and cultural growth, to a terrible social crisis, and to the downward plunge of the entire society. But this would imply not only the collapse of the proletarian dictatorship, but at the same time the end of bureaucratic domination. In place of the workers states would come not 'social bureaucratic' but capitalist relations ... whether we take the variant of further successes for the Soviet regime or, contrariwise, the variant of its collapse, the bureaucracy in either case turns out to be not an independent class but an excrescence upon the proletariat. The question of bureaucracy is a class one, and a far more complex one than the WRF leaders would have either us or their members think. The Soviet bureaucracy is tied up with the fate of the Soviet regime, it is nourished on a system of nationalised production and property relations.

Imperialism

The reformist bureaucracy of the Labour and trade union movement in Britain has been nourished to a large extent by the particular position of British imperialism, it has arisen within the workers' movement on the basis of the capitalist mode of production. But we must not deduce from this, as does the WRF today, that because the fate of this bureaucracy hinges upon that of capitalist society, and that in all places and times the bureaucracy will defend bourgeois society- and its privileged position within it against proletarian revolution, that the bourgeoisie itself will always have need of the reformist bureaucracy. This was the theory of third period Stalinism which said that the reformists (the 'social fascists') would continue to serve capitalism even after the introduction of fascism. And so too said the SLL 1969 Conference Resolution, which spoke of the reformists serving the bourgeoisie 'even beyond the doorway into fascism'. From the general theoretical truth that reformist bureaucracy stands or falls with capitalism is deduced the false generalisation that at all times, these reformist leaders will carry out the requirements of capitalism. If that is so, how can one explain fascism, whose purpose is to smash the working class organisations, including the reformists. (e.g. Chile). In certain situations the bourgeoisie itself decides through force of circumstance, to sever with the utmost brutality the many threads, material and ideological that connect it with the reformist bureaucracy. For example in Germany Trotsky insisted that the KPD make a united front with the reformist workers and leaders to fight fascism, a fascism that threatened the reformist bureaucrats no less than the leaders and militants of the KPD. Failure to employ this tactic led directly to the defeat of the German proletariat, the greatest catastrophe in all human history. And what did the Stalinists say of Trotsky's call

for a united front with the leaders who had not only betrayed the November, 1918 revolution, but murdered Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht? That he was capitulating to reformism, equating the working class with the bureaucracy, and holding back the revolutionary struggle by advocating a fight for minimum demands etc. etc.

Ultra-leftism

How dangerous therefore for Mitchell to boast: 'Our task is not to join hands with any wing of the bureaucracy or to subordinate revolutionary demands to their requirements. Our job is to smash them'. This, we repeat, is ultra-leftism of the most reactionary kind. It rules out any possibility of forming a genuine Leninist united front with the mass workers' organisation, all of which are led by one or other 'wing' of the bureaucracy, whether Mitchell likes it or not. For he says that he will not 'subordinate our revolutionary demands' to those of the reformists. In fact Trotsky never said that it is necessary to 'subordinate our revolutionary demands' to the reformist leaders in order to fight for the united front. If all joint actions with other tendencies in the working class must be on the basis of the 'revolutionary demands' of the WRP, and, moreover, directed explicitly towards 'smashing' the reformist leaders, then, a priori, united action is impossible. Mitchell and Healy know full well that the Labour and trade union leaders will not fight on the full revolutionary programme of the WRP. Therefore by issuing the ultimatum that the WRP will act only on its own 'revolutionary demands' and not those demands that can be imposed on the reformist leaders by their own workers, the WRP not only rejects the united front, but the struggle for power itself. For in the course of the struggle for power, the WRP will find itself obliged to rub shoulders in the workers' councils with reformists, centrists and Stalinists of every stripe, each tendency rejecting to one degree or another the 'revolutionary demands' of the WRP.

Harmony

Will the WRP boycott such workers councils, setting up its own 'red' workers' councils, where all is harmony, sweetness and light? Or will it enter the workers councils, accept the discipline of these councils (as did the Bolsheviki, in a minority in the soviets, when they accepted the veto of their demonstration of April 21) While they remain in a minority will they enter into joint actions with other tendencies in the councils, thus raising its prestige in the eyes of the workers to the extent that it loyally defends the councils against the attacks of reaction, and eventually gains the leadership of the majority of the class? Does the WRP believe that it will seize power without passing through the long and complex process of entering into tactical relations with other groups, including even those of the dominant sections of the Labour Party, before it has established its claim to power in the estimation of the mass of the working class? Or is there some pure, 'red' road to socialism untainted by compromises (such as were frequently entered into by the Bolsheviki, not only before power, but after-Brest-Litovsk), where the question of the united front tactic will not be posed? There is evidence that the WRP leadership subscribes to such a theory. How else can we explain the ultimatum towards the Labour leaders, their description as 'corporatists' (i.e. fascists), the point blank renunciation in advance of the united front tactic with not only the right flank of the reformist bureaucracy, but even its left flank, which, as history has shown, can under the pressure of the mass movement, swing to the left as well as to the right (France, 1934; The Socialist Workers Party of Germany, 1931; the ILP, 1931 etc. etc.)

Is the WRF so richly endowed with proletarian support and cadres, so deeply rooted in the mass organisation of the working class, that it feels free to dispense with the tactic of the united front with the left reformists? For the Labour and trade union left, Mitchell has only another ultimatum, not a serious campaign in the working class to make Labour carry out its election programme.

Conference or mass movement

'If the leftward sections of the Labour and trade union movement want to avert a disaster for the Labour Party (which remember, is a Tory Trojan horse), they must add their voice to the demand for an emergency Labour Party Conference to adopt socialist policies to meet the economic crisis ...' This is an ultimatum on two counts. Firstly, the lefts 'must' support the WRF demand for a recall Labour Party conference. We reject this as a diversion. Not another conference but only a campaign in the workers' movement can force the implementation of Labour's programme. Secondly it is an ultimatum because Mitchell insists this conference must adopt socialist policies, which are of course, those of the WRF. The call to unity is therefore a spurious one, akin to the third period united front from below. No demands are addressed to the Labour and trade union leaders, for as Mitchell has already told us, it is impermissible to 'subordinate our revolutionary demands' to them.

School

That is why, in the end, Mitchell returns to the formula he knows best - 'Join the WRF under whose leadership the working class can be led to power'. The Labour government, you see, is 'proving to be a school of education in the utter helplessness of reformism and its inability to resolve a single question facing the working class'. We will pass over the fact that Mitchell has declared his 'support' for this 'helplessness', to the main question, one which presents itself to millions of workers, if not middle class radical 'prophets' like Mitchell. Workers see what they believe to be their government under attack, on the retreat before the combined pressure of the Tory-Liberal coalition threat and international capitalism. The workers' first thought is - how can we defend this government, keep it in power, and at the same time, make it carry out its pledges? Their answer to the 'helplessness' of Labour is vastly different to the cheap cynicism of Mitchell. Their first, and correct, instinct is to fight back, not to rush off and join a party that, in terms of fighting on the main issue of the day, has nothing whatsoever to offer them, except rhetoric about the betrayals of reformism. The working class doesn't view the prospect of a reformist sell out as an academic question, but wants to know how to prevent Labour betraying their basic class interests. On this - nothing, except a fatuous call for a conference of the Labour Party.

Fosadists, Militant and WRF

We note with considerable interest that this demand is also emanating from the revisionists of the Revolutionary Workers Party (Fosadist) whose March 19th number of 'Red Flag' calls for a 'national conference of the Labour movement' to 'impose a programme of nationalisations' on the reformist leaders, a programme of nationalisation 'of the major sectors of the economy'. Another Pabloite offshoot, the Militant, is indistinguishable from the WRF in its demand that the Wilson government 'put forward a full socialist programme: an

enabling bill for the immediate nationalisation of the 250 monopolies, the banks, the insurance companies and building societies ... ' (Militant, March 22, p.4) Nowhere does the 'Militant' put forward serious transitional demands to mobilise and prepare politically the working class for the revolutionary step of the expropriation of the bourgeoisie. Like the WRF they leave this task entirely to the Labour government. These similarities with the line of revisionists should serve as warning signals to comrades. Mitchell bravely announces to the world that the WRF will 'smash' reformism. But the WRF lacks the one force that alone can settle account with the bureaucracy - the revolutionary masses. All the jamborees and pageants, the batteries of printing presses and full-time officials, cannot substitute for the leading elements of the class. No 'spectacular' however large can take the place of conscious intervention in the mass movement in order to build a regular, organised leadership. Mitchell goes round in ever-decreasing circles. He calls on the workers to 'join the WRF' - but the workers prefer to fight through their traditional organisations.

Isolation

By denying to itself the tactical and strategic weapons that can tear the workers from the grip of reformism, the WRF condemns itself to increasing isolation from the real changes in the working class. This is the price the party pays for false, empirical perspectives.

We repudiate with contempt the charge of renegacy. Mitchell's perversion of Trotskyism is an insult to every WRF member and Workers Press reader who is fighting for communist leadership in the workers' movement. We hurl the charge of renegacy back in the faces of those such as Mitchell who are revising the fundamental principles of the Fourth International. Comrades must call these leaders to account before it is too late.

THE SLL AND IRISH MARXISM (1959-1973) - A DISASTROUS LEGACY

The International Committee of the 4th International established in opposition to Pabloite revisionism in 1953 was founded on an ambiguity. Of the 3 major sections who constituted the IC, only the French section broke with Pablo on a relatively clear programmatic and political basis (having been expelled bureaucratically by Pablo in 1950 for criticism of the political course advocated). The American SWP and the British section, later the SLL, only broke with the Pabloite Secretariat when the latter's liquidationist policies affected their own sections directly, in the form of the formation and activities of the Cochrane-Clarke and Lawrence factions in the American and British movements respectively. These events jolted the SWP and its British followers into a belated acknowledgement of the correct criticisms of the French majority regarding Pablo's politics. But the full extent of the International Secretariat's revisionism and its disruptive effect on the FI itself was not grasped by the new IC, especially by the SWP and the British. Cannon's famous letter did not characterise Pabloism as a liquidationist current foreign to Trotskyism. Herein lay the theoretical roots of the unprincipled re-unification of 1963 of the SWP and Pabloites.

Struggle against SWP

But the ambiguities inherent in 1953 did not simply affect the SWP, but also the SLL. For a period (1959-1963) the SLL with the French OCI led a vital struggle against the SWP's rightward movement which resulted in important political developments within the IC. This struggle, however, proceeded on the basis of a differing understanding of the issues at stake which resulted in a failure, constant since 1959, to initiate the kind of international discussion that could have clarified the ranks of the Pabloite movement and indeed of the IC's own ranks. The IC's federal structure was the organisational expression of these differences because only a clarified, united leadership could function as a leading political centre of the FI, in practice carrying out its reconstruction.

No Internationalism

From 1963 and more especially 1966 the SLL has effectively abandoned the fight to deepen the analysis of Pabloism forced on them by the defection of the SWP to the revisionist camp. The reasons for this lie in the 'national insularist' approach of the SLL which is similar to the 'American exceptionalism' of the SWP, both of which manifested themselves in the type of response both sections made to the 1953 crisis. It was this lack of a genuinely internationalist struggle that led to the political ambiguities of the IC (and indeed on the part of the Healy SLL leadership a refusal to examine the development of Pabloism before 1953 including their own history therein as Pablo-Mandel's right-hand man up to the split itself. The SLL has never explained the political basis of its role from 1950-1952 apart from G. Healy's totally inadequate one-paragraph apology in 'Problems of the FI'.

SLL in footsteps of SWP

In the case of the SWP the exclusively national orientation led to the 1963 re-unification. With the SLL we can see especially in the last three years the almost exclusive concentration of attention on the class struggle in Britain, chosen by G. Healy as the country marked off for the first socialist revolution (just as the USA was by the SWP in 1946-47). For the Healy leadership the IC can only function as an organisational entity insofar as the prime necessity of building the SLL, the leading section, is recognised by the other sections. Other international work is made subordinate to this over-riding aim. This led to the paralysis of the IC from 1966-1971 and when the opposition of the OCI to this whole line became more and more sharp, the Healy leadership criminally split the IC without any political discussion.

Sectarianism and Opportunism

The SLL is today travelling the road of the SWP from 1956-1963, even if the road is lit by leftist, ultimatist and factionalist rather than opportunist sign-posts. As we know sectarianism can easily turn into opportunism in a short time. An indication of this can be seen in Healy's Sept. 4th, 1970 call to USFI for political discussion in which he characterised Fabloism as a Trotskyist tendency alongside the IC. Nowhere perhaps have the disastrous results of the SLL's political methodology been so clearly shown as in Ireland. It is to this that we must turn. It is a grave warning to revolutionary militants of the results of dishonest politics based on (a) theoretical confusion and its deliberate perpetuation, and (b) bureaucratic suppression of discussion on these questions within the IC itself by the SLL.

THE COLONIAL QUESTION AND THE SLL

In no other area is the ambiguous relationship to Fabloism of the SLL leadership more marked than on the colonial question. On the one hand there is a position of uncritical support to the Vietnamese NLF, i.e. the unconditional support for the military victory of the NLF which is absolutely obligatory, is never accompanied with the call for the building of the Trotskyist party. What is this but Fabloism, the capitulation to other 'revolutionary' leaderships outside the FI as substitutes? This has gone as far as glorification of the 'transcendental' protracted guerilla warfare theories of Mao Tse-Tung, Ho Chi Minh and Giap (See FI 1968 Feb. issue). Similar to this is their position on the Arab revolution where criticism of the Arab bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie is very muted.

On the other hand as an over-reaction to Fabloite betrayals in certain countries such as Algeria there is a dismissal of the colonial question coupled with 'critical' support to the reformist petty bourgeoisie, e.g. the MNA. The Fabloite leadership have made ... unfortunately ... important political capital from highlighting these contradictions and about-turns of the SLL which swing wildly between abstentionism and opportunism, after combining both as in Algeria (and also, as soon we shall see, in Ireland).

IRELAND

Ireland poses special problems to the SLL leadership. Here a colonial question exists on their own doorstep. Since for them the first and decisive leap forward will take place in Britain and since indubitably the means of class warfare against the British workers' struggles by the British bourgeoisie are being forged in the North of Ireland, they impermissably draw the conclusion that the Irish working class's role is to function as a simple auxiliary to the (legitimate) independent class movement of the British workers against their oppressors. Behind an abstractly correct internationalism ('Unity of Irish and British Workers') stands a denial of any independent role to the Irish working class whose partition by British imperialism in the twenties so strengthened British imperialism against its own workers. History cannot be cheated. The Irish working class must achieve its unity in this period of the total breakup of the old settlement ushered in since 1969, and strike a blow against British imperialism and its native client-regime that will complement that of the English workers. There is a common enemy and the revolutionary vanguard must co-ordinate both struggles as closely as possible. But the historic tasks are not identical.

Permanent Revolution

In Ireland what is posed is a very complex process of Permanent Revolution; in Britain the straight social revolution, which is however completely bound up with the Irish revolution and vice versa. The SLL's Luxemburgist position, deeply rooted in the British left and noted by Marx and Lenin long ago in relation to socialists in an imperialist country, has led them from the beginning not only to deny the existence of a national question in Ireland but in practice to accept partition. This is why from the early to the late sixties we had Belfast and Derry ... and in 1969 even Dublin ... branches of the SLL! This represented implicit acceptance of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland carried through by imperialist violence and pogroms in 1920 to divide the Irish workers. This was also why the SLL never took seriously the question of building an Irish section of the IC.

THE IWG AND THE SLL

In the mid-sixties a centrist grouping emerged among Irish political militants in Britain called the Irish Workers Group. This had a vaguely Trotskyist programme and united the most diverse tendencies, from outright opportunists like Gerry Lawless to a number of genuine subjectively revolutionary elements. Both the Peoples Democracy and the Saor Eire grouping later came out of the group. The IWG was important insofar as it was the first organisation to emerge in Ireland outside the old Stalinist and Republican stronghold since the war. In the very late fifties and early sixties a number of militants like the Bolton Bros. and Lawless had worked in close liaison with the SLL for a time. Lawless soon went with the SWF line and adopted Pabloite politics, and the SLL severed all connections with him.

No Independent Section

Neither then nor subsequently has Lawless ever had the slightest intention of building a revolutionary party in Ireland, but he was able then and later in the 1967 IWG faction fight to point out

factually Healy's consistent refusal to set up an independent section in that country. This was one of the weapons he used against the 'Trotskyist Tendency' which opposed him in the faction fight from the standpoint of the need to build a Bolshevik-type party. Despite this, and despite the fact that their fight took place in abstraction from the international struggle between the USFI and IC, the Trotskyist tendency submitted the documents of the fight in the group to the SLL. The SLL refused to intervene or even approach the struggle going on. In doing this it showed its sectarian abstentionist and anti-internationalist outlook on vital problems of concern to the world movement and greatly weakened the raw political forces looking objectively for a road to the IC.

Abstentionism

Healy, Slaughter and Co. may object that the Trotskyist Tendency included Sean Matgamma expelled by them in 1963 and in recent years an extreme Fabloite. Such an objection would be infantile. In fact, the refusal to intervene strengthened Matgamma's hand against them within the new grouping that emerged as the LWR, even though he operated in England as a leader of the 'Workers' Fight' group.

THE LWR AND THE SLL

In 1969 the LWR (League for a Workers' Republic) wrote to the IC asking for a discussion, which resulted in Cliff Slaughter's visit to Ireland in October of that year. To this meeting were invited the SLL's branches in Ireland and the LWR, who had by this time built a strong youth movement in Dublin as well as a basis of support around certain layers in the Irish Labour Party. At this meeting the LWR put forward a position of substantial agreement with the IC except on the questions of Cuba, China and Ireland. On Ireland, the LWR advocated the policy of secession of Catholic areas from the six counties (this was the aftermath of the August pogroms) and saw the crisis as one of social disruption flowing from British imperialism's democratic re-structuring of the Northern State. Both of these positions were based on an abstraction of the Irish crisis from that of the developing world crisis and expressed the pressures resulting from the national isolation of the LWR. They were correctly attacked by Slaughter and his allies.

SLL's partitionism

However, certain facts about the positions of the SLL and its Irish followers should be stressed. Firstly they held a position of calling for a Workers' and Small Farmers Government at Stormont! This position not only reflected the SLL partitionist mentality as well as the Walkerite adaptation to the syndicalism and backwardness of the Protestant Workers by their followers; it also divided the Northern and Southern struggles that together produced a pre-revolutionary situation in the autumn of 1969. Secondly, the SLL's Northern branches took an abstentionist attitude to the 1968-69 Civil Rights agitation. This had a material effect on the struggle unlike the secession theory whose advocates had no base in the North and whose role was marginal as a result. It should also be clearly said that the theoretical roots of this mistake .. the search for a 'pure' 'class' movement involving not only Catholic but Protestant workers ... partly lay in the SLL's failure to grasp the inevitability of certain forms of struggle emerging from a specific historical, national background.

No Perspective

Thirdly, the failure to win sizeable forces from the 1968-69 situation was a repeat of the experience of 1964 where the youth won in the NILP were prematurely split away simply because it had also (correctly) been done in Britain. Not only was a valuable opportunity to win a decisive voice in the workers' movement thrown away, but the youth and the bulk of the strong TU faction in the Belfast branch drifted away because of a lack of perspective by 1966.

Slaughter's meeting

The most significant thing about Slaughter's meeting was that for the first time the SLL proposed the setting up of an Irish section of the IC. The real reason for this change of position became clear only three years later. It was not motivated by a desire to build an independent healthy movement of the FI at all. What it wanted was a factional ally, an extra vote, who could be used against the French in the internal struggle on the IC Executive at a time when the 4th World Congress was very close and where the SLL had to answer for their failure and refusal to put into practice the decisions and perspectives on the 1966 IC Conference. Accordingly, although the SLL acceded to the LWR's request for a period of further study before agreeing to join the IC, they immediately organised a secret faction in early 1970 composed of students who split the LWR, before discussion had concluded, in May 1970. This secret faction was unknown even to the present author as far as its secret activities outside the LWR were concerned. Three weeks later the new Irish section of the IC was proclaimed. The following month was the 4th (Pre) Conference of the IC. The ground for the split with the OCI had advanced another step. Only in this context can the SLL's methods be understood.

THE IRISH SECTION OF THE I.C.

The immediate task of the Irish section was for G. Healy the building of a strong youth movement. This is of course a key to the building of the Bolshevik party itself. Healy however saw it as a substitute for the party. This was why in early 1970 he issued an ultimatum to Jack Vance, George Craig and Freddie Campbell, the Belfast Protestant militants who led the section, that unless a big youth movement was built quickly, he, Healy, would split with them. This approach of the SLL runs like a red thread through the history of the SLL's 'Irish Section'. It recalls Trotsky's words in the Transitional Programme: 'In their own circles, the sectarians customarily carry on a regime of despotism'. The building of this youth movement however was not conceived of as issuing from intervention in the real class struggle but of a high-pitched activism of an abstract nature.

Youth Orientation

Such activism manifested in the organization of dances, film series, meetings and sport, drew in large forces around the Irish Young Socialists, firstly in the North in late 1970 and then in the South in early and middle 1971 from whom a nucleus of important cadres were won. But it was done at the expense (a) of the adult movement whose paper 'Vanguard' was dropped and where the production of a theoretical magazine was continually put off because IYS work

absorbed all its time and (b) the IYS itself where political education was confined to a few classes and a series of public lectures given by Healy in late 1970 and 1971.

SLL Chauvinism

When we say that the building of the IYS did not issue from intervention in the actual class struggle in Ireland we mean precisely that. The entire content of IYS political activity was the selling of the 'Workers' Press' and their own 'Bulletin' which concentrated on propaganda against the British Tory Government in England. Indeed the central political demand of the Irish movement to its own working class was for a General Strike to bring down ... the Tory Government of Britain! This meant that the IYS campaigns were just part of those of the British YS and consisted of taking delegations to an endless round of rallies in England: the Anti-Tory rally of February 1971, the 1971 YS Conference, the Summer Camp (admittedly important), the ATUA rally, the Wembley Fool 1972 rally, Y.S. Conference 1972, the Summer Camp 1972, Empire Fool 1973 etc. In retrospect given the isolation from the class movement that these policies produced, it is to be marvelled that the IYS held together so long. The warning signs appeared continually though.

Disillusionment

By early 1971 the entire old leadership in Belfast had left the movement in disillusionment. While in no way apologising for their backwardness politically, the major responsibility for their demise was Healy and Co.'s criminal chauvinist policies foisted on the Irish movement, who were too backward to realise their content. It was inevitable that with their base in the TU movement they would be the initial casualties. They represented with all their weaknesses the most advanced layer of the Protestant working class and were hence of critical importance. (This, however, cut no ice for the SLL leaders who have refused to recognise the division in the Irish working class and proceed as if the Protestant workers were not dominated by reactionary ideology and have to be broken from it.) Their consequences for the whole Trotskyist movement in these islands is being felt negatively today in no uncertain manner.

Administrative methods

Before proceeding on to the internment period and its aftermath which produced the effective break-up of the IYS, a word should be said about the role of Dave Fry, the leader of the Irish section. This man was handpicked by the SLL leadership as their 'man in Ireland' and his political position is and always has been one of bureaucratic dependence. He represented no forces in the working class nor an individual who had made a qualitative political development of any sort. Indeed he was made Secretary of the SLL's new Dublin branch (!) in late 1969 within a couple of months from the time when he actually supported the intervention of British troops in Ireland and had led a life of petty-bourgeois bohemianism as a student at Trinity College. In 1970 he took leadership of the section. These facts in themselves show the SLL's thinking in the setting up of a new section ... what they wanted were political satellites in the manner of Zinoviev's 'Bolshevised' Comintern or Pablo's sections from 1946-1953 where centralisation and political

homogeneity are carried through by administrative methods without political clarification, such methods being epitomised in the selecting of right-hand men.

Soul searching

Fry introduced into Ireland Healy's ultimatums and the type of internal regime that dominates the SLL where there exists constant 'struggles' against tendencies and individuals which bear no relation to the problems of intervention in the actual class struggle but centre around failures to achieve organizational targets e.g. number of papers to be sold or finance to be raised which are never analysed soberly on the basis of the conditional, changing relation of class forces and that between the party and the class but are said to reflect the conflict between theory and practice. To resolve this conflict these individuals are required to make some abstract 'change' constantly, This semi-moral, idealist notion is very akin to Maoist 'self-criticism'. The best description of it however is contained in the Transitional Programme where Trotsky says: 'Since sectarians, as in general every kind of blunderer and miracle-man are toppled by reality at every stage, they live in a state of perpetual exasperation complaining about the 'regime' and the 'methods' (PE) and ceaselessly wallowing in small intrigues.' This type of infantile practice, given theoretical gloss by the artificial so-called Marxist philosophy introduced by the SLL leaders for the first time at the 1970 IC Pre-Conference to cover up for their failure to have read the French documents that formed the basis of that Convention, was supposed to represent 'leadership' and 'political struggle' on Fry's part.

Internment and the National Question

Internment represented the turning point that began to blow apart these 'revolutionary' pretensions. Whilst the class struggle in the South was still in the midst of a temporary lull since December 1970 and while the struggle in the North against Army repression had only reached a certain level it was possible to check to some extent the logical consequences of functioning politically as if one lived in Britain. Such a possibility ended abruptly on 9th August, 1971. The national question burst onto the political scene. From then on what was posed was the destruction of the sectarian state of N. Ireland, which had vast consequences for the struggle throughout both islands. Through the rent/rates strike the mass struggle against Stormont exploded, linking up with the military struggle.

Scant coverage

None of this was grasped one iota by the SLL or its Irish followers. Workers Press ran a series of editorials on the North whose total number far lagged behind the coverage in the bourgeois press, which has always more keenly understood the implications of this conflict than the leaders of the SLL. These editorials made a number of formally valid points in criticism on the programme and perspectives of its Provisional IRA leadership but never adopted unequivocally a position of critical support for the IRA, which abstentionist position it retains to this day. At the same time the SLL began to praise the 'official' Republican movement to the skies to the point where in early 1972 a Workers Press editorial stated that the Officials only needed to read and study Lenin's 'Materialism and Empiro-Criticism' to become Marxists. They were

not talking of the rank and file or sections of it as the movement in Ireland, including this author, thought. They were talking of the Official movement as such. Thus not alone did they repeat the Algerian mistake but they took up a clear Fabloite position of searching for alternative revolutionary leaderships. Healy had contacts with Sean Garland and other Sinn Fein leaders which the Irish section (except possibly Fry) knew nothing about. So while the Irish comrades sought to recruit from the Officials' ranks ... in Derry and Galway notably ... Healy was going over their heads. Of course when the Officials called their cease-fire in May 1972 demonstrating their basic reformist character, the SLL quickly issued a disclaimer in a series of 5 consecutive editorials in late May where in a totally unprincipled manner they even talked of the Officials 'bearing the mark of Cain' and their 'betrayal of their Provisional Brothers'. I say unprincipled because the SLL's 'support' substituted journalistic jargon for real intervention and struggle, as the April 1973 OCRFI International Bureau statement correctly points out. This sloganising also undercut any gains being made by the IC statements after Direct Rule and the Provo cease-fire.

'Class Struggle' in Ireland

All of this only served to accentuate the political confusion of the Irish leadership, young and totally inexperienced. After internment the failure to relate policies to the new situation resulted in a catastrophic loss of youth North and South, some of them to the officials. The line of alliance with Gardiner Place was no accident because the perspective of a 'democratised Stormont' and that of a 'Workers and Farmers Government at Stormont' both share an implicit acceptance of partition. Talk of a United Socialist Ireland would scare away the Protestant worker. This was explicitly stated by Fry who at a League meeting in Dublin just after internment said he didn't give a damn about a United Ireland but was only interested in classes and class struggle.

'Republicanism'

At a CC meeting the present author was violently attacked for Republicanism by Fry for drawing attention to Trotsky's 1916 statement where he talks of the Irish workers swinging naturally to nationalism and syndicalism and pointing out its relevant nature in the new period. As was the wont these doubts and differences were suppressed in the face of the imagined infallibility of the SLL and Fry. What finally drove the nail into the IYS coffin was the Right-to-Work campaign which was a mere extension of that in Britain and which only achieved any response in the town of Waterford and Newry, despite a huge rise in national unemployment in Ireland in the first few months of 1972. A party of 20 youth were brought over for the 6 week long marches in Britain and Fry went over too, leaving the Irish section without a national secretary and only full-time organiser for a month and a half.

Not published

By this time of course the SLL had carried out a split in the IC against the OCI. A series of documents of the SLL's IC 'majority' and a couple of the French's less important statements were the sole documentation on which the SLL's client sections had to evaluate the issues. The OCI's major policy statements in La Verite 556 and 557 where they not only gave their position on

the Bolivian, United Class Front and Philosophy issues but also the history and nature of the differences in the IC itself were never published by the SLL for obvious reasons. Naturally these sections including the Irish adopted the SLL line which (without any opposition internally) proceeded to impose itself the more strongly.

Fourth Conference

In April, 1972 at the 4th IC Conference Healy launched into an attack first on the American, then on the Irish section. One of the things the Irish were criticised for was (i) a failure to produce an overall perspective and (ii) a simply sectional orientation to such as the Official Sinn Fein! The second needs no comment; it simply demonstrates the SLL leaders' self-deception and bad faith. As for the first, when it was promised in October, 1972 by Fry, Healy dismissed it as of secondary importance, just as the 1970 Pre-Conference document by the French had only been a 'smokescreen'. Differences were now however beginning to openly emerge in the Irish movement.

Isolation

The present author became highly critical of Cde. Fry's dropping of any fight to develop a historical perspective. The pressing urgency of this stemmed from the by now virtually total isolation and tiny size with a half-dozen youth in Dublin and one-man branches in both Belfast and Derry. Secondly, they emerged around the need for an adult movement and press. The first signs of the re-awakening into struggle of the Southern workers came in June 1972 on the questions of a second national wages agreement and Labour's right-wings decision to form a coalition partnership.

Opportunities

Both of these opened up new opportunities to fight for the independence of the class and win important forces. Hence the need to change the organisation to bring in these individuals. The trouble was that the Youth Bulletin, though technically better since it became a printed fortnightly, was trying to be all things to all men, i.e. a newsletter appealing to both adult and young workers with a title that repelled adults and did not strike the youth forcefully. These things all crystallised around my conception of orientation to the Labour militants and youth on a programme of Labour fighting for power and being forced to lead on both the national and social questions. This was only articulated in embryo form. There was undoubtedly a tendency to orientate to the Labour Party almost entirely in this campaign and not to take it into other areas of the class struggle. But there was never any question of political or organisational liquidation into the Labour Party, as the SLL leaders lyingly accused me of later. In any event they never fought to work out or discuss the tactics of this campaign with the Irish comrades at any stage.

Ultimatism

By late 1972 the financial and organisational problems of the movement rooted in isolation (itself the final product of the preceding 2½ years' policies) became acute and showed itself in

the deterioration of the technical standard of the 'Youth Bulletin' as well as at the IYS 2nd Conference. This led to the summoning of both Cde. Fry and this author to the IC October meeting. At this Healy launched into an utterly disgraceful tirade against the Irish, denouncing them for opportunism, tail-ending the middle class, reformism and ... nationalism, because doubts had been raised about the major emphasis on Workers Press sales in Dublin. This author was said to have lived on the surface of politics (which was true ... because of SLL politics) and above all we had underestimated the struggle in Britain. He then proposed as an ultimatum the suspension of the section i.e. its expulsion, although this author took it literally to mean temporary cessation of activity in which I thought some things might be clarified. This was assented to by all present except Fry who understood what was involved. After a short break Healy relented and said that if an agreement were reached on sales of Workers Press and Marxist literature in Ireland, he would not support the suspension of the section. Once again in supine fashion all agreed to the pronouncement of the leader.

Chauvinism

I have gone into great detail on this meeting because in a nutshell it demonstrates the essential ultimacist chauvinist and idealist-sectarian methodology of the SLL leaders. Following the meeting, unable to articulate this understanding yet knowing it instinctively, this author declared to Cde. Fry that he could not continue in the Irish section. This was a tactical blunder which when learned by the SLL leadership later led to his expulsion (commuted by Fry to a six-month suspension if financial and writing activities were agreed to) in December, despite the fact that he subsequently stayed in the movement. Meanwhile Mike Banda and Slaughter travelled over to 'clarify' the Irish section as a whole.

Firmness and Flexibility

Outside the Workers' League ... the adult section had been publicly proclaimed ... and under the impetus of the industrial mobilisation in the South against the arrest of McStiofain, an important political development was made by this author with regard to the national question. This was fought for with Fry and resulted in a series of important articles on this question in the new 'Workers' Struggle', itself an important achievement, which began to equip the movement to intervene in a revolutionary way around the questions of Army terror, the White Paper, the local government and Assembly elections before the Northern workers and among the ranks of the Provisional IRA in Belfast. Unfortunately, at particular points the then-leadership of the Workers' League was unable to combine political firmness and a necessary tactical flexibility toward (a) the Provo rank and file and (b) the Political Hostages Release Committee, adopting ultimacist stances which tended to undermine work in these fields.

McStiofain

While this was happening the SLL and Workers Press for the first half of 1973 said virtually nothing about developments in Ireland, North or South, despite the fact that in December 1972 they ran a series of articles by Ian Yeats on Political leadership in Ireland, and held a Public Meeting in London demanding McStiofain's release

(to date their only practical activity on the Irish question in Britain). This author was engaged in writing a perspective which he had insisted on, taking in the struggle in Ireland since the early sixties; its relation to the British struggle, and its political lessons. In the course of this he developed a basic critique of the SLL's position on the national question here. For tactical reasons this difference was only communicated to Fry who expressed partial agreement with it and agreed to submit it to the August IC meeting. Fry considered however that there was a danger of capitulation to the national bourgeoisie in it and pointed to a review of 'Freedom Struggle', never published, by this author, in which there had not been the usual simple sloganising but a posing of fundamental political questions in a concrete fashion to the Provo rank and file.

Expulsion

In due course the criticism of the SLL was submitted and led to my second and final expulsion by the IC for 'liquidationism into the Provisional IRA' without the criticism even discussed at the meeting. This author was prevented from defending his position at the Dublin Leage Branch meeting that week.

WHETHER THE IRISH SECTION?

Looking at the press of the Irish section since August, one is shocked at the fact that 80% of it consists of Workers' Press reprints and of the rest the material on the Forth is simple phrase-mongery that avoids the need for real struggle, while nothing is said of the struggle of the Shop Stewards Committee against the National Wage Agreement in the South from whose activities the voice of the Workers' League is noticeably absent. While isolation, much of it directly inspired from London, is intensified there is a reliance on interminable cabaret shows for finance that now consumes all its activities. There is taking place a headlong retreat into a world of photo-montage fantasy, more and more removed from class activity. Already half the cadre nucleus in Dublin has left and groups won from the Official Sin Fein in Derry and Dublin must soon follow for they are joining a sinking ship. Its National Secretary, though dedicated, is not the type politically who is prepared to face the consequences of revolutionary integrity, especially when this leads one to scrutinise the role of individual leaders. If the Workers' League finally disintergrates, it will be a testament to the criminal chauvinistic irresponsibility of the SLL towards the Irish proletariat.

THE LWR AND THE OCRFI

Even after the SLL faction's split, the LWR continued to ask for a further discussion with the SLL. Their letters were never answered. This weakened them in 1971 greatly when the Pabloite IMG began to intervene in and organise around their Dublin youth section who joined in its majority with the revisionists and split from the LWR. The 'two-nations theory' of the LWR was obviously a major factor in this but the failure of the SLL once again to intervene against the USFI was also an important factor. Nonetheless, this bitter faction fight against the Pabloites, later the RMG, clarified many question for the LWR leadership and helped them later grasp the issues involved in the IC split. They contacted the OCI in April 1972 and attended the 2nd session of the IC Pre-Conference in the summer of 1972, later becoming a section of the OCRFI.

Discussion

This article does not suggest that the OCI and the LWR possess a monopoly of political wisdom (as others do) or that neither have made mistakes in the past. The national question (e.g.) comes in mind: Algeria and the OCI who have since analysed their 1958 mistake, while the LWR are struggling with their own national problem so as to rectify ideological and absentminded errors committed in the past. The most important thing is that the national question like all questions is fully discussed with positions freely taken and fought for within the OCRFI whose fight to make the OCRFI become the leading centre for the reconstruction of the FI is the sole rallying point for Trotskyists and militants looking for a road to the FI. The pamphlet is being published as part of the political discussion and clarification leading to the Open Conference, itself crucial to the re-building of the FI as the centralised World Party of Socialist Revolution. It is directed in particular to members and international followers of the SLL which in its own country now talks about 'the end (!) of the role of the 'lefts' in the Labour movement after the 1973 LP Conference' (WP, 6th October, 1973), thus overthrowing all the teachings of Lenin and Trotsky on the Labour Party and moving to an openly sectarian policy epitomised in the 'Transformation' (by decree, outside the conditions of development of consciousness among the masses) of the SLL into the Revolutionary Party. The SLL's future is in the melting-pot unless its ranks examine their history honestly and change course before it's too late.

ELECTION THOUGHTS

First let me make it clear that the following is no 'in depth' study that can be used in a general sense. It is merely a fragment of opinions expressed by some workers in a large engineering plant in West London. If it has any value at all it lies in the fact that unlike the opinions 'expressed' by people interviewed by the Capitalist and 'Trotskyist' press it outlines the disjointed consciousness of workers and some of their illusions - I would add that the plant concerned (CAV Ltd., Acton) had 'blacked' generators purchased by the Company to reduce the effects on production of the 3-day week. Also fears of large-scale sackings permeated the entire site.

Unlike the 1970 General Election when apathy was the dominant factor - where many of the CAV workers couldn't distinguish between Labour and Tory governments, the 1974 election was followed with interest, this is not to say that no apathetic elements remained - they of course did - in fact these elements had hardened into cynicism. By and large the workers wanted Labour back. The issues concerning them most were prices, mortgage rates (many have houses), education and rents. The EEC was also an issue which cropped up in discussions - this had 'upped' food prices in most workers opinions. Some believed that 'the Unions' had ruined the last Labour government, that the fight against 'In Place of Strife' had opened the door to the Tories and their Industrial Relations Act - a future Labour Government must be given a fair crack of the whip.

Issues that Concerned Workers

The prices issue dominated all the discussions - some saying that price controls had worked during the war, others felt that it was a 'fact of life' that food was no longer cheap, that Wilson had been chucked out in 1970 on this single issue. Office staff considered themselves let down by the Tories especially on the issue of mortgage rates - their children were finding it impossible to purchase a home of their own. Council house tenants had endured several rent increases since the Tories took power. Although many expressed distrust of politicians in general, they nevertheless wanted their grievances dealt with and the election speeches were critically examined. But those reading the WF became despondent. Everyone was a 'con merchant' or a traitor if they didn't live in one of the 9 constituencies where the WRF was standing - they were to vote Labour - but everything in the paper pointed to the futility of such an exercise - the Revolution was clearly 'not on', the Party had decided on the 'Peaceful Road to Socialism' !!!

Attempts to Divide Members Fail

The Miners' strike had affected the earnings of all the manual workers - and this despite Management's propaganda had not turned them against the strikers - the most consistent message that Management received was 'I wouldn't go down a mine if I was paid £100 per week' ! Had the Management's plans worked the shop stewards committee would have been faced with a major split in the membership. The Company had purchased several expensive generators and the diesel fuel to run them - approximately one-third of the work force would be employed on the 2 days when there was no power available from the Grid - another third would be asked to come in on these days to work in the dark without heat. This would have

left about 1200 workers on a 3-day week. In line with its parent Company (J. Lucas), CAV began a 'voluntary' redundancy campaign. Mass meetings were convened and the demand - 40 hours work for all, Black the scab generators - was made and carried. Unity (with some small cracks here and there) was maintained.

The Labour Party slogan 'Back to work with Labour' therefore got a good response from CAV workers and Nigel Spearing, Labours' candidate, got a good audience one lunch hour outside the plant. He challenged the Management to reveal its plans for the Acton site - the local press echoing local traders fears for the future of the giant plant gave the story front page coverage. Management's interference with the Social Security payments for CAV workers also increased the general excitement.

Class Nature Revealed

The knowledge that Joseph Lucas (CAV's parent company) annually paid out £12,000 to Tory funds was a useful point in arguments about the company's bias - workers who last year had received a miserly £2.29 site increase, which of course shrank after Income Tax, didn't exactly love the Management when that was revealed via the Labour Research Information Sheet. Foremen, who were Tories (as many are), found their political influence diminished since they, like the rest of the staff, were drawing full salaries for doing precious little on the two days workers were absent. The class nature of the situation revealed itself quite sharply.

'Petty-Bourgeois' Elements in the Factory

The few East European elements had among them several landlords whose Tory bias was a constant factor in CAV politics - a number of owner-occupiers among the indigenous work force were also landlords - not in the old sense but in having taken upon themselves a mortgage (probably they were unable to find private or Council rented accommodation) as manual workers they found the monthly payments a severe burden - and thus had tenants to ease the payments - still others were 'comfortably off' as workers go, having finished payments for their homes. The boom period has passed, but the products of massive overtime and landlordism and the inevitable Spanish holidays have left their mark - many of the individuals in this category, by no means all of them skilled, made known their intention of voting either Tory or Liberal - the support for the Liberals was something new. It is often forgotten by Lefts (who preach impoverishment of the masses) that in the South East of England many a man's wage is supplemented by his wife's earnings, not a factor to be overlooked when dealing with the economic effects of developments such as the 3-day week. Apart from 'overtime' some sections also perform work of an entirely different nature outside of the regular employment. This then forms the economic basis of their petty-bourgeois opinions. More extreme elements are in the main unable to communicate their counter-revolutionary ideologies because of language difficulties and find no political expression other than 'anti-unionism' but few scab as in the past. Fears of redundancy because of age and language difficulties have forced most to, reluctantly, join the 'Communist' union. The Foremen and Assistant Foremen are either right-wing Labour, pro-Jenkins 'who would make a good Prime Minister' (although curiously they are anti-BEC) or Tories, few admitted to be Liberal sympathisers.

Benn Speaks - Workers Listen

Labour gained most support prior to the polling day with the Wedgewood Benn statement on fuel stocks - immediately people started telling each other that there were tons of coal in and around their local power stations - one, of course, had to allow for exaggerations - but intelligent individuals not known for wild statements were saying quite clearly that even where the power stations concerned had been out of use for months 'Welsh mountains of coal had been stock piled for over a year'. The generally accepted conclusion was that the Tories had deliberately planned to defeat the miners, that the 3-day week, the 'Switch Something Off' campaign, and all the hardships involved were the fault of Heath and the Tories. The fact that prosperous individuals were constantly preaching about the 'National Interest' and the need 'to pull our belts in' also added fuel to the flames. Such was this feeling that a suggestion that the factory should be occupied and all the power turned on (when it was banned by Fuel Regulations) began to receive popular support in some quarters. Practical difficulties stopped this development - if groups came in and the Power was 'cut off' by the CEGB it would be difficult to organise the occupation.

'Workers Fress' Antics

The WF could not make up its mind about the need for a Labour government, which puzzled its readers. The whole emphasis was on exposing Labour as traitors, whereas the real 'exposure', they had been told, would take place when Labour in power would have to attack the working class in order to manage capitalism in crisis, at the same time the demands of the class would be put as their needs and aspirations were being thwarted by their government. The conditions would then be ripe for the Revolutionary Party. But the WF seemed to concentrate on its own activities in 9 constituencies - all the TU leaders were rogues - all the 'Labourites' were traitors, assisting the Tories who were (a) preparing for Civil War, (b) going to Smash the Trade Unions, (c) going to incorporate the TUs into the policemen of the State.

From one day to the next the prospect became more confusing and terrible - worse, it in no way corresponded with that which the most advanced layers were thinking and saying. This meant, of course, that unless CAV was an island divorced from the rest of the class (remember, we were 'blacking' generators to assist the miners), the entire working class was unfit to carry out its historic task - only the WRF and its 9 candidates could do anything - but of course what they could do without the mass support of this same working class was never disclosed. The paper began to be extremely difficult to sell, in 1969 more than 30 copies per day had been sold, now it was a question of 5 (if the sellers turned up that is). Benn's important speech had been attacked, there was no difference between 'lefts' and 'rights' in the Labour Party - the workers in their overwhelming majority wanted Labour back, but the matter was of 'no consequence' - the people who believed that there was no difference, in main the more cynical and apathetic of the work force were strengthened by the paper's antics (hardly material for revolutionary consciousness!) The militants wanted Labour back, few had illusions that 'everything in the garden would be lovely', but they wanted the hated Industrial Relations Act repealed and this Labour had promised to do; they wanted 'out' from Europe and re-negotiation of the terms had attached to it some form of public referendum. As for prices - the Saturday 'Daily Mirror's' Shopping Clock had more effect than the revolutionary press. So the WF appealed to the cynics who would probably abstain in the General Election anyway. The most advanced

layers were the most critical of the paper. At this time of polarisation the WF was very out of touch.

Birds of a Feather Sit Together!

But what really upset readers was the antics of Stephen Hammond, the WF journalist who was the WRF candidate for Dunbartonshire Central - his sitting at a platform with the Tories etc. really inflamed old readers. How can this happen, how can someone warn of Tory plans to smash the Unions one day, then sit down with the class enemy the next? The paper got ripped up, of course there was no answer to this, the man had openly stated that his main reason for standing was to expose Jimmy Reid the Stalinist; the Tories seemed to be a lesser evil, yet it was the Tories who were in power, the Stalinists, like the WRF, seemed all set to lose their deposits. Reid's publicity seeking (Scottish Daily Express marathon) etc., as well as the IMG's talking to the bourgeois Press (we do, you don't) had been rightly condemned by the WRF but apparently this had all changed because of the General Election. From this moment on I refused to sell the paper.

Workers Wanted the Labour Government

So, despite the WF's cooling-off towards support for Labour - the workers were determined that they wanted a Labour government - the rights wanted a social contract and attacked Scanlon's hints that it didn't exist, the lefts wanted collective bargaining returned - they wanted the engineers' claim met in full, the overtime ban planned by the IC wasn't enough, a National strike was required, and that should have been called in conjunction with the Miners' strike. No-one thought that the Liberals were a serious contender for power, the point that they were 'neutral' not tied to Unions or Big Business was not attractive to the workers. They had problems that needed urgent action, putting things right means conflict, the problems were more pressing than the fear of struggle. The Centre Point occupation was one demonstration, one protest that did get the workers' blessing - it underlined the class nature of private property, homeless and inadequately housed people versus the property owners and developers. The WF more or less dismissed it as pointless.

Voting Habits Change

When polling day came, a significant number of workers had got up earlier than usual to go to the polling booth to vote. Others who lived locally went in their lunch hour - generally voting takes place in the evening when one has settled down after a meal, this explains the number of abstentions - but this phenomenon suggested a high poll.

A Matter of Indifference, or is it? or Too Much, Too Late

The next few days were interrupted by the weekend and the absence of workers from the factory on Monday and Tuesday (the 3-day week) however, when they returned the feeling against Heath's hanging on to power had angered many, and even backward elements hinted that the Queen was in cahoots with the Tories, yet the WF seemed indifferent to the colour of the next government! The line dramatically changed, a demonstration was called to demand that the Tories get out - trade unionists were invited to bring their banners - too late

- the Tories had already gone. Too early - Trade unionists had to go to their branches (a) to get permission to take the banner, (b) to collect it. Besides not every branch held meetings on a Monday, - result, a march whose objectives had already been achieved and no TU banners!

The policy now became clear, the WF had attacked reformism in order to build it up - so it could be knocked down later, the 'left swing' of the election (in fact more voted Tory than Labour, indeed more voted National Front than WRF!) would pave the way for the Party. It is of course not 'left swings' based on votes but the specific weight of the organised working class with a revolutionary leadership that is decisive, but the WRF, as far as CAV is concerned, never entered into the situation - they were millions of light years away. There is a desperate need for the revolutionary party based on the 4th International Programme - the crisis of leadership is indeed the over-riding problem of this epoch.

(For those who doubt the conclusions drawn in relation to the WF, I suggest a study of the papers published during the period February to March would be a most useful exercise.)

One worker, a reader for more than 3 years described the WF thus:

'Its like a nagging old woman sitting in the back seat of your car - the direction is wrong, so is the speed you're travelling at - either too fast or too slow - nothing is ever right, the trouble is that she herself can't drive'.

Another man told me -

'It's one thing to put demands on the Labour government - that it keeps to it's manifesto - but to tell workers that it will act as a Trojan horse for the Tories after you're asked to vote for it only confuses them - somehow your message about Reformist betrayal ends up in the reader's mind that you (the WF seller) have somehow conned him into voting Tory!

People still look at my copy of the WF, and apart from the 2 WRF miners votes, they were singularly unimpressed - Hammond's vote (52) was 'too many' in the opinion of many workers, the Stalinists of course had a field day at the WRF's expense. Not only had Hammond sat with the class enemy, but also with Jimmy Reid as his 'main reason for standing' - had been thoroughly trounced for his troubles.

LABOUR AND THE WRI

Objectively the defeat of the Conservative government has been the most important achievement of the recent election. The Conservative Party constitutes the main threat to the organised working class. The Labour government, however fragile in parliamentary terms, has the proven support of the mass of trade unionists. This was tested at the polls. This government, elected by the working class, both to defend living standards and make changes to specific legislation is a frustration for the big bourgeoisie, which sought to force wages down through the aggressive policies of the Conservatives. Parties and governments are not exactly identical with the class which they represent. The Tories were found lacking in ability to hold down the unions. It was inevitable under the quickly deteriorating economic conditions of the past two years that the more vulnerable sections of capital would be calling for alternatives to Heath's patient attack. However, the important sections of British capital remained with Heath. The obvious and more deep-rooted swing to Liberalism and nationalism revealed the rising frustrations and nervousness among the petty bourgeoisie and professional layers.

Undoubtedly this move was provoked by the collapse of money values and a consequent pressure on credit and salaries. No section of the important capitalists yet stands with this movement. In itself it represents still a first reflex of those not immediately linked with the working class, or with the strength of the big bourgeoisie.

In the main the organised working class, consisting of trade union members, voted Labour. This was a confirmation not of a low level of appreciation of the crisis of inflation but that the link between Labour Party and unions remains central to the political activity of the working class. Amongst the working class there was no significant move to other tendencies than the Labour Party. The tendency, given voice by Powell and the National Front in Britain, and by Craig and Paisley in Northern Ireland was supported by a small lumpen element in the working class, as well as by the disoriented petty bourgeois layers.

This was provoked in Northern Ireland by special conditions, in an area where a Labour party has never been dominant. In Britain a clear distinction must be drawn between Powell and the National Front. Powell speaks for a section of the Conservative Party which has at least a link with the important bourgeoisie itself. The National Front represents in embryonic form that movement of lumpen and unorganised rabble which receives substance only when the bourgeoisie backs it. The National Front vote reveals that conditions now allow the growth of such an anti-working class movement on an enlarged scale. Despite this the lumpen element within the working class itself remains unorganised.

During the period of Tory government after 1970 and especially since the Pentonville 5 incident, a working committee existed between the PLP, the LF, NEC and the TUC. The trade union bureaucracy will undoubtedly work now with the Labour government to restrain the actions of the unions. However, this is not the decisive factor. The will of the bureaucracy is not simply strengthened by a Labour government. Objectively, in terms of its ability to organise freely and in terms of the pressure which can be brought to bear on those who supposedly control the state, the working class in returning Labour was strengthened.

The programme of the Labour Party contains pledges to repeal the Industrial Relations Act, the Housing Finance Act and certain other laws. These pledges are a result of the fighting actions of the workers over three years of Tory government. The pledge to repeal these laws expresses the link the Labour Party has with the working class, in practice.

Labour, as a reformist government, held within the bounds of capitalist property relations, will work in the general interest of capitalism. Objectively what this means in the period of the decline of British imperialism is an attack on the standards of workers and intensified exploitation. Labour is a particularly bad tool for this job, on behalf of the bourgeoisie. Labour is elected to fight for the working class, its strength really lies in the support the trade unionists give it. It can attempt to stall action by the unions, but it has never successfully mounted a sustained attack on the working class in the manner of Baldwin, of Churchill and of Heath. Not in the time of MacDonald, nor Atlee, nor Wilson has it fully satisfied the requirements of the bourgeoisie.

The new Wilson government, especially in view of its parliamentary fragility will attempt to buy off the most important sections of the working class. In this it will not incur the total opposition of the bourgeoisie. Not every industrialist has yet discarded the traditional British methods of buying off the important sections of workers to disarm the class as a whole. We must not forget the 'financial deal' which was recently offered to the miners, albeit by a cranky accountant. It is certain that the real objective base for such a 'conciliatory' approach - the reserves of imperialism - have largely vanished, but consciousness, even that of the bourgeoisie, changes more slowly. Before turning to fascist alternatives the bourgeoisie has to learn its own weakness, just as the working class its strength.

Within this unresolved situation by no means all support will be denied Wilson by the bourgeoisie. Benn and Foot have not been made ministers to 'expose themselves' but to placate the unions. This involves, starting with the extreme contrast between Labour and Tories over the miners wage claim, granting real concessions to the working class. Not that this can go very far. It must be noted that Prentice and Jenkins, the wing of the Labour Party most concerned with holding back the class struggle, have suffered effective demotions in the Cabinet.

We aren't confusing the reformists' intentions with their actions at all. We are simply pointing out that the Labour Party, in Parliament, is not simply a gang of villains determined to drain every last penny from the people who voted them in. At this stage, where Labour has overwhelming support from the working class we look at the differences in the government as reflections of the crisis of leadership. The left reformists are more responsive to the needs of the unions than Prentice or Jenkins. This doesn't mean they can fulfil these needs but their limitations can only be tested in practice by the actions of Trotskyists within the mass movement. The isolation of the WRP from events in the Labour Party make the shrill verbal attacks of WF on Benn even more empty. Lord Chalfont can attack the WRP in the Times, from a base in the LP, largely because the Trotskyists have no access to the tribunes of the mass party themselves.

The Labour ministers are already beginning to present signs of their own impotence before the capitalist crisis. Shirley Williams very soon announced she couldn't hold prices down. Some sort of prices and incomes policy is therefore inevitable. But in this situation to shout that Labour is preparing to attack workers' living standards is to miss the point. Wilson is not Heath. The Industrial Relations Act is useless to a reformist government, indeed Wilson is pledged in the Queen's Speech, to its repeal within a year. Obviously he, and Williams, are caught between the continuing (more wage claims have recently been announced) demands of the Unions, and the demands of the bosses. In this situation the TUC leaders as they were from 1966-70, are directly linked with the Labour government. It is here that Wilson is more vulnerable and where demands for the carrying out of a basic programme in defence of living standards, linked with the actions of the workers themselves, become central. Len Murray has offered Wilson a 'voluntary' wage restraint if certain actions, like repealing the Industrial Relations Act, are undertaken. Previous bulletins have taken up the spurious charges of 'corporatism' made against the TUC leaders in WF, but we can add here that if Murray were indeed a 'dedicated corporatist' he would hardly be demanding the repeal of the IR Act. In fact the TUC approach does reveal the desperate attempts of the union bureaucracy to 'by-pass' the class struggle, but also the fact that the laws of Heath are an anathema for reformists. In the time of Barbara Castle's 'In Face of Strife' it was the TUC which transmitted the overwhelming objection of trade unions to the Wilson government.

When the Labour Party, as a national organisation, was founded, between 1918 and 1921, the trades unions financed it and its policies were intended to express their general interests. The Councils of Action, which in large part prevented the armed intervention of Britain in Russia, were composed of representatives from both unions and Party. Many of the Labour ministers in R. MacDonald's pre-war government were ex-union bureaucrats. The betrayal of the 1926 General Strike was carried out by a united action of MacDonald and Henderson in Parliament and the TUC leaders.

The repeal or neutralising of reactionary laws like the Taff Vale judgement and the Osborne judgement was equally the work of Labour MP's and trade unions. The Labour Party has been unthinkable without its link with the unions. The Trade Unions and Labour Party reformist leaderships have been responsible for the biggest betrayals the British working class has experienced. Yet through them both the workers have voiced and won demands for better wages, repeal of laws, education and health services and attempted to control the state.

The Labour Party exists to control Parliament. The working class and the trade unions have an interest in Parliament which remains the central organ of the bourgeois state in Britain and the highest tribunal. Especially at times when the bourgeoisie turns to fight and defeat the advanced, most class conscious layers of the working class, as is the case with the Heath government, does the need for a Labour government become an important and clear need for the workers. At such times, especially in the pre-1924 period, 1945 and today, the Labour Party Programme expresses, in weakened and muted fashion, the demands of the working class and the needs of the unions. These needs and demands are always specific and never generalised into calls for a 'socialist programme'. Such calls on the Labour leaders ignore the fact that the opposition of the reformist leaders to the will to power of the working class does not

extend to every demand, every action of the militant workers. The Labour leaders are caught very concretely in the contradictions of their own politics. In order to exist as leaders of the workers' movement they do repeal laws, grant wage increases, increase taxes on the rich, nationalise property. They do this in order to emasculate the groping of the workers to State power.

Trotskyists must not counterpose 'socialism' or a 'socialist programme' against the steps taken by the reformists in order to expose them. We must counterpose the immediate needs of the workers movement to the actions of the reformists, especially where the Labour government has already pledged itself to action on behalf of the workers, as this Wilson government has. The Labour Party manifesto promises nationalisations in particular of the land. However, the most urgent aspects of the manifesto and the Queen's Speech, which expounded Wilson's intended programme for the next year are those which affect standards and rights directly. Especially important are the freeze on rents and any subsidies on food. Also the abolition of the Industrial Relations Act. The Wilson government must be defended against the Tories unconditionally. The Trotskyist must, in order to advance the whole class past its reformist leaders, not demand wholesale nationalisations as a test of Wilson, but demand the release of the Shrewsbury building workers, the breaking up of the police anti-picket squads, a permanent freeze on rents and other measures which can be fought for as an immediate object of the workers movement. At a certain stage, when state power itself is brought into question, along with the private ownership of property, nationalisation becomes a pertinent, concrete demand to place on a government of a working class party.

The British working class has, through the miners, stood up to the state and brought down the Heath government at the polls. It has definite expectations of Wilson. Under these circumstances how wrong it is to raise demands for immediate nationalisations to propagandistically counterpose 'socialism' to the measures proposed by Wilson. Why does Wilson do things like freezing rents? Obviously this was not the aim of the bourgeoisie which was represented by Heath. No sign of relief at the rent freeze being a further 'attack on workers' standards' has emerged in the capitalist press. Why not? Because the bourgeoisie knows that Wilson is being forced to accede to the more urgent needs of the working class through the fighting spirit of trade unionists. The election has produced an unstable situation in Parliamentary terms, but for the first time since 1970 the government claims to represent working people. How much it does this or not depends primarily on the strength of the working class itself. Like it or not, Heath was in retreat before the unions. He knew what was necessary to have a state strong enough to decisively defeat the unions but he hadn't, in the last resort, the nerve. This hesitancy on the part of Heath, who set up an apparatus, but never really used it, reflects a hesitancy on the part of the whole British bourgeoisie. The last such similar confrontation with the union movement was of course in 1926. But the balance of forces today is far more favourable to the working class. Under these conditions it is more difficult, not less, for Wilson to sell out the workers than it was for R. MacDonald.

The last Wilson government from 1964 to 1970 did try to exert pressure on the working class, but it was an entirely different kind of pressure from that of Heath. Wilson will exploit the relationship between the Labour Party and unions to exert pressure

inside the workers movement. This is the special virtue of reformism for the bourgeoisie. Only in extraordinary circumstances do the reformists line up with the state against the whole working class. Even renegades like the Germans Scheidemann, Ebert and Noske, responsible for the deaths of Rosa Luxemburg and Leibknecht had to go outside the state to achieve it. When Heath was in office the TUC offered to consider the miners as a special case and stall other wage claims. Heath declined. Wilson acceded to the miners through the auspices of Michael Foot as soon as he came to office. Why? Because the power base of the TUC and Labour Party bureaucracy exists through a complicated series of relationships inside the workers' movement. In order to maintain control of this movement Wilson will, on more occasions, accede where he cannot prevent the working class taking action. So long as this is possible within the bounds of capitalist property relations. This is the way reformism works.

Reforms are never excluded in the class struggle. The Left MP's especially, like Benn, have a stake in actually fighting for reforms. The class struggle can never be 'reformed' out of capitalism, this is the problem for such people, but we must insist: not every single act they make is an attack on the workers. Benn especially may attempt to hinder what he regards as certain harmful traits of capitalism by the 'intelligent use' of the bourgeois state. He is doomed to failure. We must have no illusions in Benn, but if we turn him into an outright traitor before his time we cannot ourselves make a link with those advanced workers who support people like him. Unfortunately perhaps for the WP, the working class is not all simultaneously at the same level of consciousness. Men and women who vote together, strike together and fight together, support different elements of the Labour movements. Resolutions have been made by workers who had illusions in the most right-wing reformists. Extreme right wingers found themselves at the head of movements they were unable to prevent. This period, after the election, is no exception. It's as well to remember also that those TUC leaders, Feather and so on, branded as 'corporatists' over a whole period by WP were precisely the people who were forced at the time of the Fentonville 5 incident to call a General Strike.

It is possible to strike blows at the bourgeoisie without seizing state power and taking over all property. The programme of the Wilson government, if implemented will allow the unions to fight more freely and hinder some aspects of economic war against the working class. It is the work of the Trotskyists to promote this programme by extending its points into campaigns of action within the workers' movement. Thus when Penn talks of the need to open the monopolies' accounts to inspection we insist on inspection by workers' representatives. Thus when a temporary freeze on rents is announced we fight for a permanent controlled level, related to the cost of living. Whenever we counterpose a demand to the programme of Wilson we must ask: does it offer an immediate, practical step forward for the working class or is it outside of that step forward?

Whilst we cannot say crudely that left social democrats are produced directly when there is an upswing in the class struggle the Labour Party leaders do feel the need to relate their policies and what they say to the existing level of consciousness in the working class, in order to stay as a leadership.

In the Transitional Programme, Trotsky outlines that the actions and consciousness of the working class must develop up to a specific point through its existing organisations. In Britain this means overwhelmingly the Labour Party. In the demand of the miners for a Labour government, in the way in which the ASLEF rank and file acceded to Euckton's calling off the one-day strikes in favour of Wilson, this was clear. Not for a minute do we expect the Labour party to be pushed by the workers into becoming a revolutionary party. But at this moment the workers are not asking Wilson to be a revolutionary, because a maximum revolutionary programme is not at all the immediate precondition for taking steps forward. In fact the workers want Wilson to carry out certain definite measures against the bourgeoisie, which they know are essential to defend the unions and allow struggle to continue. The working class is not blind, but it advances not through conceptions of 'programmes' but through its experience of the real stages of struggle.

For WE the programme of reformism and the Labour Party on the one hand and the 'Trotskyist programme' and the WRF on the other are mutually exclusive. What does the Transitional Programme actually say?

'The Fourth International does not discard the programme of the old 'minimal' demands to the degree to which these have preserved at least part of their vital forcefulness'.

The Communist Manifesto deals with this in another way -

'In what relation do the Communists stand to the proletarians as a whole?

The Communists do not form a separate party opposed to other working class parties.

They have no interests separate and apart from those of the proletariat as a whole.

They do not set up any sectarian principles of their own, by which to shape and mould the proletarian movement.

The Communists fight for the attainment of the immediate aims, for the enforcement of the momentary interests of the working class; but in the movement of the present, they also represent and take care of the future of that movement.'

Between Marx and Trotsky there exists a unity of purpose: that to advance concretely the struggle against the bourgeoisie the Communists identify themselves with the 'immediate aims', the 'momentary interests', the struggle of the workers at every stage. Even when it flows through a reformist party, even when it expresses itself in the programme of the Labour Party, and hopefully, in the Labour government - so long as that programme preserves at least part of 'its vital forcefulness'.

The WRF cadres, the leadership, the newspaper, must take what is valid for the working class from the programme of Wilson and fight in the working class - the Labour Party and trade unions, for its implementation. All the time it can then link itself with the real,

subjective consciousness of the class. In counterposing the 'socialist programme' to Wilson WF counterposes itself to the aspirations and outlook of the vast majority of workers. This is the reason for the low votes given to WRF candidates in the election. They were actually moving against the direction of the majority of workers, who voted Labour to defeat Heath.

Verbally the WF editorials may look the same as the approach of Marx and Trotsky - workers must vote Labour, but only in order to 'expose' the reformists. This leads to an ultimatic isolation of all the WRF cadres from the developing vanguard in the unions. More dangerously it places the main attack of the Trotskyists against the reformists and allows no united action with those workers who still have illusions in Wilson or Benn or Foot. A journalistic comparison between what the Trotskyists would do if we were the leadership of the working class and what Wilson is doing does not advance the fight against the ruling class one step and therefore makes no gains for the revolutionary party.

Recently WF has placed the two approaches, that of Marx and Trotsky, and that of G. Healy side by side. Thus in the same article we find a call for Labour to implement its minimum programme (a correct demand), with a demand that Wilson adopts a ... 'socialist programme' and attempts wholesale nationalisations as a precondition to advancing another step. This juxtaposition is a hypocrisy. The positions must be clarified. Either take the methods of the Transitional Programme, in which case it is necessary to immediately rejoin the ranks of the Labour Party, in which we fought for twenty years, and to build campaigns which Wilson cannot evade, seeking to unite the whole movement; or follow the 'socialist programme' demand to its practical conclusion, which means increasing isolation from the living changes in working class consciousness and results in actions like Stephen Hammond attacking a CP member and a LP member from the same platform as a Tory.

The recent 'Open Letter' to members of the Labour Party, unfortunately addressed to no tendency, no recognizable leaders, no platform, reveals clearly the criminal separation from the increasingly class conscious current running through the Labour Party. After a series of generalisations Gale proposes in real terms indefinite actions, no reason why Labour Party members should listen to him. Instead all we find is a promise of WRF support (from outside the LP!) if somehow miraculously a few of the soldiers inside Wilson's Trojan Horse decide to fight for a 're-call conference'.

The real issue is not on the level of the 'reformist programme' versus the 'socialist programme' seen as ideological opposites. The real issue is - what steps must Wilson, as the elected representative of the working class, take, in order to remove the laws of Heath, to defend our living standards. Contrary to the WF 'socialist programme' the Trotskyist Transitional Programme, is, in every sentence, a programme of action for the workers. It is our task to propose and organise this programme of action in the Labour Party and trade unions, to force home the revolutionary implications contained even in some parts of the Labour Party 1974 Manifesto. Point 5 for example, pledges Wilson to 'Repeal the Housing Finance Act, and give back to local authorities the right to fix rents which do not make a profit out of their tenants.'

It is on points like this that workers voted Labour. WP has consistently counterposed 'socialist' nationalisation of the land to 'reformist' demands like Point 5. Yet the immediate necessary step to defend council tenants etc., is Point 5. Workers will compare the actions of Wilson not with immediate nationalisations but with Point 5, which they voted for. A whole campaign can be mounted by the Trotskyists for the implementation of Point 5, if Wilson falters, with constituency LP's, union branches, Labour MP's and councillors called on to support it. This way not only the Wilson government but all levels of the Labour Party would be tested in practice in front of those concerned - this way the ability of the WRP to fight for the real needs ('the attainment of the immediate aims') of the workers will be proven and the struggle for leadership take a real step.

To ask Wilson to accept a 'socialist programme' which finds no reflection in the struggle or consciousness of the mass of workers will not advance the class on the road to power. Therefore such a demand cannot help the WRP to win the leadership in this struggle.

The German KPD, in the 20's and 30's claimed the leadership of the working class by right, however the German workers did not agree and a large proportion continued to support the SPD. So long as the KPD could not reach them by common demands and by advancing the struggle it could not win the majority of workers to its banner.

The WRP must turn to the working class, through the Labour Party, before the working class can turn to the WRP. We must organise campaigns in the Labour Party and unions on the outstanding problems facing the workers movement, especially rents, prices and reactionary laws. We cannot fight for Wilson to adopt as policy measures like the Sliding Scale of Wages and Hours if we cannot take the lead in the day-to-day battles of the class ourselves. Action within the ranks of the Labour Party is unavoidable for the WRP if it means to achieve its aims. The working class took decades to build the Labour Party and it has not, and will not, reject it automatically because of its complicity in propping up capitalism. The ability of the Wilson leadership, again in Government to carry out wholesale reforms is even weaker now than in 1964-70, however this is the wrong comparison to make (see J. Gales series on Labour Government, 1964-70). The working class now sees Labour as the only party capable of acting in its defence against the Tories. At this moment this estimation is correct, if only because it has no other political party.

The Labour Party contains in its programme, pledges to repeal the Industrial Relations Act, and to control inflation. These demands are a response to the pressure of the workers, just as the complete withdrawal of 'In Place of Strife' by B. Castle was. Likewise the unions attempted to pressure Heath into withdrawing the Industrial Relations Act, with absolutely no success. This must be seen as a measure of the difference between Labour and Tories. The Labour Party cannot escape, and must respond to, its base in the trade unions and therefore is an inefficient tool for the capitalists. Reformists are an element within the working class movement. Wilson must respond (within the bounds of capitalist property relations) to the demands of the workers if he is to remain at their head. The trade unions in Britain support only the Labour Party electorally and financially, in this Britain is largely unique. Thus men like Heffer and Benn, now ministers, are drawn

to take stands on the battles of workers, in unions, against the bosses. Benn spoke clearly in support of the UCS 'work-in', against the yard-owners. Heffer was connected with the fight against the lump in the building industry. Many millions of workers, trade unionists have illusions in men like Benn and Heffer. To unite the class behind Labour's programme, as WP has claimed to want to do, means in fact a principled approach to this layer. What then is to be made of an approach which attacks Wilson before the Tories, and the Labour lefts and Stalinists before Wilson? We estimate the consistently active membership of the Labour Party to be upwards of 200,000. Is the whole approach of the WRP to this layer, many of whom are shop stewards, class conscious workers, to be counted as the 'Open Letter' of J. Gale in WP? In practice these 200,000 members (600,000 card-holding members) are inseparable from the politics of reformism which dominate the trade unions. If we, the Trotskyists, cannot make approaches to them, then we cannot conceive of winning the leadership of the union members as a whole.

In Britain the Labour Party and unions act as a class front, behind reformist politics, for the working class. To fight in the unions on a programme of political demands, however minimal, means to bring into question the link between the dominant section of union members and the Labour Party, to whom many pay a levy and for whom 70% vote. The WRP, however large, comparatively to now, it may grow, cannot break the working class, the trade unions from reformism if it does not work within the organization of the Labour Party, to reach its class conscious layer, to expose Wilson in practice. The perspective is not one of entry work to transform the Labour Party, but to test it, by its own criteria, to the limit, for workers to see how far its programme and organisation will go in fighting capitalism. Those of us who work around the 'Bulletin' work as Trotskyists in the Labour Party. We support, in a principled fashion, those actions and policies of the leaders which tend to unite the working class and attack the bourgeoisie, and we oppose all policies and actions which work in the other direction. This must become the approach of the Workers Press.

The Wilson government appears to be fragile and at the mercy of Heath, Thorpe and Paisley. In parliamentary terms this is true. But it has come out of an offensive by the working class internationally.

Edward Heath, desperately trying to prepare a state strong enough to fight the unions, passing laws he was unable to use, was in retreat before this offensive. The British bourgeoisie is divided, however much WP plays it down. The attack by Edward du Cann on Heath, the departure of Fowell, the vacillations of Campbell Adamson, director of the CBI, reveal the crisis within its ranks. It is in this situation Wilson has been elected. Nothing remains static. As yet Wilson has neither satisfied the needs of the workers, nor can he, but at the same time he is incapable of attacking the working class consistently. The Wilson government was elected by the working class, they continue to support it, and will do if it can hold back the offensive of the ruling class. The weakest point in the whole working class is, at present, the Wilson leadership of the Labour Party, but if it refuses to attack the bosses, state or private property it must go farther than it intends to hold onto the leadership at all.

The NUM leaders, especially Gormley and McGahey reveal how this process operates. McGahey, an old Stalinist, reflected the level of consciousness of his members when he spoke of approaching the

troops. Gormley more than once spoke of bringing down the Tories, and even of a General Strike. CP approaches these things in entirely the wrong way. When the leaders say such things we must endorse them, this way they really are called on to follow their words in action. The way in which the NUM leaders were forced to fight for the full claim and various Labour leaders to back the claim reveals how far even bureaucrats will go to hang on as such.

What the miners did to Gormley and Foot, we, the Trotskyists must attempt to do to Wilson. Only along that road lies the exposure and final defeat of reformism.

WORKERS PRESS AND THE LABOUR GOVERNMENT

'That reformism is the worst brake on historic development and that the social democracy is doomed to failure - this is ABC to us. But the ABC alone does not suffice ... the candle burns most brightly before it goes out ... we must take the resultant political situation as it is, without creating any illusions. Of course, we always remain true to ourselves and to our banner; always and under all circumstances we say who we are, what we want and where we are going. But we cannot force our programme upon the masses mechanically'

(Trotsky - Our Present Tasks
7th Nov. 1933)

In our first two bulletins, we illustrated how the WRP has cut itself off from the real movement of the working class, even going so far as to abstain from the fight for a Labour government. In this third bulletin we will examine the WRP's record up to the vote on the Queen's speech.

On Tuesday, 5th March, the day after Wilson became Premier, the WRP headline read 'Squatter Heath Goes' (Although the lead article was not brought up to date in many places and talks of Heath 'Defying the Verdict of the Electorate') and proceeds to present the maximum programme of the socialist revolution as an ultimatum: 'Labour must stand or fall on the introduction of socialist policies demanded by the working class to defend it from the unprecedented economic crisis' going on to enumerate nationalisation without compensation etc. Now the only conclusion to be drawn from this statement is that if Wilson does not legislate the socialist revolution, then as far as the WRP is concerned, it can 'fall' - presumably with the WRP participating in the death blow. But what is the measure of the 'Vote for socialist policies demanded by the working class'? - only the miniscule vote for the WRP candidates! The fact remains that the bulk of the working class voted for the Labour Party, and it would be sheer self-delusion to believe that it did so while subscribing to the programme of the socialist revolution advanced by the WRP.

To approach a worker saying 'Wilson betrays because he does not carry out revolutionary policies' will only provoke the reply 'But I don't want a revolution - all I want is to defend my standard of living, which is what Labour will try to do'. The WRP is doing precisely what Trotsky warned against above - forcing a maximum programme upon the working class. The task before Marxists is to show the working class that these reformist policies are inadequate and that means being in the forefront of the struggle to force Wilson to implement them: Trotsky continues:

'You socialist workers ... hope not only to save what has been gained but also to move forward along the road of democracy. Good! as long as we have not convinced you and attracted you to our side, we are ready to follow this road with you to the end. But we demand that you carry on this struggle for democracy not in words but in deeds. Everybody admits - each in his own way - that in the present conditions a 'strong government' is necessary. Well then, make

your party open up a real struggle for a strong democratic government ... we Bolsheviks would retain the right to explain to the workers the insufficiency of democratic slogans: we could not take upon ourselves the political responsibility for the social democratic government; but we would honestly help you in the struggle for such a government; together with you we would repel all attacks of bourgeois reaction. More than that, we would bind ourselves before you not to undertake any revolutionary actions that go beyond the limits of democracy (Real democracy) so long as the majority of the workers has not consciously placed itself on the side of the revolutionary dictatorship ... the more serious and thoughtful, the less noisy and boastful the character of the work, the sooner we will gain the confidence of the proletariat beginning with the youth, and the surer it will lead to victory'.

All comrades are urged to read this work - Trotsky is here talking about the defence of democracy against fascism and the demands are appropriate to that situation - a situation which the WRF characterises as prevailing at the time of the election (military coups etc.) We do not accept that characterisation, and do not believe the WRF believes it either, otherwise its demand would be along the lines traced by Trotsky in this article. What is important here however, is the approach to the working class. He insists that Marxists fight with the working class to return their party, and also to defend that party against the bourgeoisie; to be in the forefront of the struggle to involve the working class in demanding that social democracy carry out its programme. Only in this way are the revolutionaries seen to be the ones seriously fighting to defend the working class - only thus will workers be won to revolutionary politics (consciously place themselves on the side of the revolutionary dictatorship) - and only then can revolutionary actions be undertaken. Was Trotsky's statement a concession to reformism? - On the contrary, this is the only way to break workers from social democracy.

Did the WRF leadership draw on this period of the movement's history? They did precisely the opposite! As we have seen, they are prepared to bring down the Labour government in conditions where only a Tory or coalition government could replace it. The importance of the return of a Labour government for millions of workers is that in their eyes it creates more favourable opportunities for gaining partial reforms and advancing the wages struggle. Revolutionaries must take into account this mass movement with all its illusions, and be at the forefront of the struggle to prevent the Tories and Liberals combining to bring Labour down. This is how to win the respect and eventually, the support of workers still tied to the policies of reformism. And it does not in the least involve any concessions to bureaucracy, either right or left. It is therefore necessary that if Labour is to fall in Parliament, it must be on an issue or series of issues behind which can be rallied the entire Labour movement for its return on a massive scale in the election that would almost certainly follow. And if, with the connivance of the Palace, the Tories and Liberal repeat their intrigues of 1st and 2nd March, then the demand must be put on the TUC for a general strike to bloc the formation of a Liberal-Tory coalition. The WRF must have a strategy, a policy and tactics for preventing the return of the Tories! This is the road to breaking the workers from reformism. But the WRF offers something rather different.

Their basic right to work -

'We have urged the immediate founding of councils of action in all areas to support the occupations and to fight for policies of nationalisation without compensation and under workers control. To all trade unionists and Labour supporters we have addressed a special appeal: demand an emergency national conference of the Labour party to adopt a socialist programme to meet the economic crisis'

Workers have been 'called on' to create dual power - a revolutionary situation!! The 'Special Appeal' went no further than the pages of Workers Press - no approach was made to the trade unions and Labour party, and in any case, the demands are irrelevant to the mood and thinking of the working class and the political situation. Furthermore, the WF puts forward the same demands under a Labour government that it did under the Tory government! Nothing has changed! The Stock Exchange plunges to its lowest level for six years, the Labour movement has brought down a Tory government, elected a reformist government - and nothing has changed!

(March)

The lead article on Wednesday 6th, by A. Mitchell, began - 'The newly formed Labour government has a clear mandate from the Labour and Trade union movement. It must immediately repeal the Industrial Relations Act, the Housing Finance Act, the state Pay Laws and its two corporatist offshoots, the Pay Board and the Prices Commission'. In other words, carry out its programme (why we should demand of corporatists, i.e. fascists, that they should repeal 'corporatist offshoots' is not explained) This apparent about-turn is even more surprising in view of the same writer's characterisation the previous day of the 'Explicitly Tory terms of the Labour document'. But in fact nothing had changed - Mitchell goes on to demand that the Trojan horse - to which we shall return later - call a national conference to vote on the socialist revolution. It was in fact a purely verbal adaptation to the working class - tailending, not participating and leading. There was no call to the trade union leaderships to mobilise their members for the implementation of Labour's minimum programme, just the diversion of a Labour party conference, and what is the purpose of such a conference - it could only be a debate with the bureaucracy about revolution - a debate which the bureaucracy would win, and because the WRF has abandoned the entry tactic, the WRF would not even be able to participate! More importantly, by refusing to call for the mobilisation of the working class for the implementation of Labour's minimum programme, the WF supplements the bureaucracy and allows it to manoeuvre with the Tories; and if such a manoeuvre comes off in the sense that the life of the Labour government is extended, Wilson's standing in the working class is enhanced, not diminished.

On Thursday 7th Mar., answering his own question 'Is Wilson's government to be a Tory Trojan horse?' A. Mitchell declares 'It seems clear that the answer is Yes. How else can you explain ... (that) ... yesterday for the second consecutive day, the pound and shares gained on the markets.' How the previous day Shirley Williams had announced food subsidies, and the Stock Exchange, depicted in WF as enthusiastic supporters of the Tory Trojan horse, responded with ... a slide of 11.7 points. The Stock Exchange is now at a lower level than at any time in the history of the Tory government. Mitchell's statement is a blatant lie, concocted in order to bolster a false political line - namely that big business is as keen a supporter of the Labour government as it had been of Heath's. The subsidies are

quite correctly attacked by Hammond, who however, goes on to say that 'the working class must reject them' in favour of the nationalisation of the food industry under workers' control and without compensation. 'Reject' - but how? Whether Hammond likes it or not, we have a Labour government which was not elected on the policy outlined by him, but on the reformist policy of food subsidies. It is not there a question of 'rejecting' subsidies in favour of nationalisation (which is simply counterposing the minimum reformist programme to the maximum programme of the WRP), but of finding a road to the millions of workers, housewives and others desperate for action on prices. What is required is a set of transitional demands, not the maximalist ultimatum. The demand to be raised is the opening of the books of the food monopolies, their inspection by elected committees of workers drawn from the mass workers' organisation - LF, Trade unions, Co-ops etc., together with housewives and old age pensioners etc. Professional and trained people sympathetic to the workers' movement must be involved in the drawing up of a national plan for the food and allied industries. As the struggle for such a plan develops as part of the broader struggle against the employers, the demand can then be raised for workers' control over the food industry, as the preparatory step to nationalisation. All this is to be found in the Transitional Programme of the Fourth International. But not in the Workers Press. The WRP isolates itself with its maximum programme. The subsidies pledge won considerable support for the government - but not where Mitchell fabricated it - in Threadneedle Street.

A new page of squalid opportunism was also opened on the 7th March. After contenting itself for weeks with the State Prosecutor's statements, and abstaining from, when not actually condemning, the campaign in the working class (see Bulletin No.1) the editorial suddenly demanded 'Release the Shrewsbury 6'. It is not the call that is wrong, but the cynical way their case was only taken up to attack the Labour government. The editorial rounds off 'A mighty campaign must now be launched' (by whom? through what organisations? the paper is silent on these questions) 'to release the 6 and implement the election programme'. The points of which are then enumerated; but this is then vitiated by the ultra-left demand to 'disband the standing army and the police'. How what approaches have been made, and to whom, for such a 'mighty campaign'? It is clear none have in fact been made - again it is just a verbal accommodation to the working class - which makes it all the more cynical. As to the demand to disband the Army, this is a demand proper only to a revolutionary situation - which paradoxically is analysed by Trotsky in a reprinted article in the same issue. We urge all comrades to re-read this article and compare it with the light-headed nonsense in the Political Committee statement printed the next day, Friday 8th March.

Furporting to examine 'the Miners Strike: the Lessons', the statement only emphasises the sectarianism of the WRP. It speaks of 'the corporatist conspiracy between Heath and the TUC leaders' (which we examined in Bulletin 1) and the threat of military-police dictatorship - in fact, if Heath was to stage a military coup, it would have been on 2nd March - but of course, his triumphant entry in the tanks turned out to be his dejected departure in a pantechicon. It then goes on to claim that 'the election of Labour is the culmination of a mass movement to the left in the working class unprecedented even in 1946'. Apart from the fact that the year is wrong, it is this totally wrong idealisation of the working class which presents serious dangers. In fact, Labour's percentage of the vote dropped to the lowest in years - flabby sections of working class and a large layer of the petty bourgeoisie turned toward the Liberals.

To proceed from this wrong analysis leads to the conclusion, as vacuous as it is bombastic, 'It is a negation of Chartism on a higher political level'. Kennard too reached a new low in obscenity with a Private-Eye type montage of a police horse defecating Heath. Does this mean that the police ousted Heath and not the working class? - some 'negation of Chartism on a higher political level'! And of course, the lesson of the miners' strike is to call an emergency national conference

On the 12th Mar, the editorial conceded 'Of course, sections of workers will have illusions in the Wilson government ... but this is only one side of the development of the working class. The other side is the mobilisation of its enormous class strength, which will be intensified now that the miners have opened the door to other workers to fight on wages ... the task of revolutionaries is to separate this development of working class strength from illusions in the Labour government or in its 'left' face represented by Foot, Heffer, Orme and Company'. Precisely, but how? 'Our answer is to insist, and prove in practice, that despite Labour's election success, Toryism will never be out of power until a real socialist government takes over wealth and power on the basis of the ownership and control of the means of production by the working class'. But this is to restate the problem. How do you 'prove in practice'?

'We are not averse to taking advantage of splits within the Labour bureaucracy, but this is not done siding with one side or the other in terms of 'left talk', but by mobilising the working class behind socialist policies to expose all sections of the bureaucracy, particularly those who talk most left'.

Once again, the ultimatum. 'Illusions' are in the policies of Wilson and the lefts - they are not broken 'in practice' by presenting an ultimatum, but by leading the campaign to implement them. Reformists can only be exposed on their own programme! This means giving critical support to Wilson and the lefts in so far as they fight to implement that programme; not in the belief that they will, but confident that when they pull back, the Marxists will be seen as the ones seriously fighting for the interests of the working class. And this is how to take 'advantage of Splits within the Labour bureaucracy'. Critical support for the lefts must be given when they fight a retreat from the programme. There are, in fact, many instances of critical and conditional 'siding with one side or the other' in the history of the revolutionary movement - Lenin's call 'All power to the Soviets', which were controlled by the Mensheviks and SR's, 'Down with the ten capitalist ministers' was similar - even in the history of the Trotskyist movement in Britain we had the Bevanites, the Clause 4 committee, CMD against Gaitskell, 'Make the left MP's fight' campaign etc. - many older comrades were won in these campaigns, which basically, had a correct orientation. All the lessons of the British and International revolutionary movement are being dissipated in a sectarian turn away from the real hopes and aspirations of the working class - the attitude to 'splits in the bureaucracy' is simply political voyeurism.

The same issue illustrates this clearly: the previous day Wilson had announced the Rents Freeze, a measure which gained considerable support - and the Workers Press ignored it (after all, 'Toryism is still in power') except as a derogatory aside on Clay Cross. Not that the demand Clay Cross should not pay the £1 increase is

incorrect - it should be taken up in the campaign to force the repeal of the Housing Finance Act, not to try and illustrate the worthlessness of the freeze, i.e. as a stepping stone towards sharpening the conflict between Wilson and the working class, and not as an obstacle - which is what the bureaucracy wants.

The danger of all the chatter about a Trojan horse was clearly illustrated on Monday 11th Mar. A young miner is quoted as saying 'What was said on the front page of the Workers Press is true - the Labour Party (yes - 'Party') is a Tory Trojan horse sent into the working class'. We do not blame the miner for this - this is the price paid for the consistent sectarianism of the WRP. The greatest gain this century of the British working class - its mass party - is written off - it was built by the Tories and pushed through the gates of the working class. But the Labour Party is the political expression of the trade unions - so they must be Tory organizations! Clearly there is only one way forward - build the WRI and the Red trade union, the ATUA !!! The WRP leadership may deny that this is their position, but there is an inescapable logic here - one that clearly misleads and confuses workers. We repeat - if you cannot defend the Labour party there is no chance of exposing its leadership - and the WRI cannot even defend the Labour party against its own supporters! This Trojan horse is yet another expression of the petty bourgeois radicals in the WRP and has its own logic - all organizations with bureaucracy can be characterised as capitalist and 'sent in' - even the USSR! The point incessantly stressed in the struggle with the State Capitalists has been that if you cannot defend the past gains of the working class you cannot hope to make more gains. This is of course being borne out in the case of the WRP - for all its bragadoccio about mobilising the working class, there is not one section of workers that the WRP can in fact mobilise!!!

The Queen's speech was, of course, a retreat from the manifesto which emphasises our position - that the campaign for implementation is the road to exposure. WF, however, was only able to sink deeper into the morasse of Trojan horses and emergency conferences. On Friday 15th Mar., WF put its finger on the Problem: 'The Labour leaders have turned their backs on (in fact, they have never faced) basic nationalisation without compensation and under workers control ... this has nothing to do with parliamentary majorities, but is a product of the reformist politics of the Labour leaders'. Yes, but it is precisely these 'reformist politics' in which workers have illusions. The success of WRP policies was illustrated in a demonstration the previous night. Originally called to 'release the Shrewsbury 6' (in fact this demand was at the bottom of the lead banner) it was planned for almost a week (first announced in WF Monday 11th March) and WF claimed a turnout of 600. No building workers banners were carried - which emphasises the discredit brought by the WRP's abstention in the campaign conducted up to their imprisonment. Furthermore, there is a London membership of approximately 1,000 and a national target of 10,000 by 1st May - and yet after a week of campaigning only 600 or so could be mobilised!

On the Friday the Liberals announced that they would vote for the Tories amendment on the Queen's speech - clearly to bring down the government and set up a Liberal/Tory coalition. WF solemnly counselled 'On Monday night Foot must declare the government's intention to immediately repeal both the Industrial Relations Act and the Counter-Inflation Act. If it has to, Labour must go

down fighting for its election commitments'. Formally correct! But there was no express defence of the Labour government, no call to the unions to mobilise their members in defence of Labour's programme against the 'Tory-Liberal Blackmail'. It was in fact a purely verbal adaptation to the working class - tail-ending, not leading a fight to show how Labour can implement its programme. Indeed the election programme was then written off with an appeal for an emergency conference. But the lefts then spoke up! Rene Short, on 17th March warned that she and others would not vote with Wilson if there was any dilution of the Queen's speech. Splits were appearing in the bureaucracy - she criticised some of Wilson's ministerial appointments. She had a more sensitive finger on the pulse of the working class than the WRP! How did WF react? True to its sectarian isolation - 'not siding with one side or the other' it poked fun at Short !! (see 18th March) The fact that on 19th March she 'is to be congratulated' and 'is right to raise misgivings' makes the position worse. This is just tail-ending the lefts, and the duplicity of the WF's congratulations can be gauged by the fact that Scanlon's speech threatening the strength of the AUEW to force through the election programme was never reported. These were precisely the splits in the bureaucracy that a revolutionary party would seek to exacerbate.

The Tories and Liberals in the event, did not vote against the Queen's speech, which delighted WF as it 'proved' the Trojan horse theory. But what was the real reason? When the Liberals announced they would vote for the Tories amendment, they anticipated that the defeat of Wilson would lead to Heath being asked to form a government. But Wilson out-manouvered them - he announced that he would not resign, but would force another election - and it is likely that Labour would then be returned with a much greater majority. True, concessions were made, but another factor was Wilson's election threat - he threatened the Tories with the working class!!

In conclusion, the following points are clear from the above:

1. Originally the WRP was quite prepared to see the Labour government fall, unless it legislated the socialist revolution.
2. The demand for implementation was taken up after considerable delay, i.e. THE WRP only tail-ended the working class.
3. The refusal to call for the mobilisation of the working class to defend the Labour government, and to ignore those instances where the bureaucracy itself threatens such mobilisation shows that WRP would be happy to see the government defeated by the Tories, i.e. bring to an end the most favourable conditions for winning the working class to revolutionary politics.
4. The demand for an emergency conference of the Labour Party is, in fact, reactionary in that:
 - a) It is irrelevant to the present political situation, thinking of the working class, and
 - b) it spreads very dangerous illusions. It is a turn away from mobilising the class to win new gains in favour of a debate with the bureaucracy.

The issue of Saturday 23rd March, illustrates this clearly. In the lead article Mitchell says the lefts 'are not going to fight for Labour's minimum programme. They must be compelled to. And that means calling an immediate Labour party conference to adopt a socialist programme for the crisis ...' But do you force the implementation of the minimum programme by adopting a new, maximum programme? The 'Open Letter' in the same issue only serves to emphasise this nonsense. It is addressed not to the Labour leadership but only to WRP readers. It assumes that the Labour Party will vote to accept a revolutionary programme, which we do not accept. It thereby predicates that the working class already has a revolutionary consciousness, which is nonsense. The Labour Party must then 'go back to the country for a mandate to end capitalism' - the parliamentary road! And if the Labour Party stands on the maximum programme why should the WRP put up 500 candidates (never repudiated!)? Indeed why have a revolutionary party at all if the Labour leaders can be forced to the left in this way? Everything emphasises our point in Bulletin No. 1 that the founding of the WRP signified the beginning of a dissolution of the revolutionary party.

5. If any organisation needs an emergency conference it is the WRP, to fight its way back to Trotskyism. Trotsky's above-quoted article, The Transitional Programme, his life's work, is a condemnation of the WRP today.

Reorientate the WRP. Let the discussion begin.