

## BIG FLAME AND THE LABOUR PARTY - A NEW POLITICAL DIRECTION?

This document is written for the June Day School on the Labour Party, though it has far wider implications. As Linda Suddes said at a recent National Committee, the debate on the Labour Party is a priority for us at the present time. This is not because the Labour in itself is the key question, but because it acts as a focus for what is really needed - a deep-rooted debate about our long-term political direction. As a number of comrades have commented, the recent conference did not take this up effectively. There was bound to be a reaction and we are already seeing some of the signs. One is the recent meeting called by Kimberley round his document 'Facing the Challenge of the Eighties'. In it he states that: "I'm convinced that unless we adopt a clear political direction and stop being all things to all people, we'll just break up exhausted and demoralised", (p.10).

We agree, though we disagree fundamentally with the direction that is offered; which appears to us to want to re-cussitate political perspectives developed in the period of boom and mass struggles, combined with a repeat of the 1977 Project for a new organisation with BF at the centre. As this document has not yet been officially 'published' it would be wrong for us to refer in any detail to it. We will concentrate on our own perspectives. There are many important questions facing BF and the Left at the moment - sex and class, re-building anti-racist work, working inside the unions etc - so there is no way that we would argue that the debate on the Labour Party encompasses or submerges all others. But it is important because the issues aren't just organisational. It directly overlaps onto the terrain of general political strategy, at the level of the state and of local activity (eg on cuts).

As FM points out in the NC document on BF's position on the Labour Party, our perspectives contain a number of ambiguities when trying to come to grips with these questions of reformism, the LP, the state and revolutionary strategy. We have the early positions that reformism is more than the relationship of the working class to the Labour Party; posing instead a relatively sophisticated view that reformism is rooted in:

- i. Wider conceptions of society, reformism seeing socialism in limited terms, avoiding the necessity to transform all social relations.
- ii. The everyday re-production of life and in ways of doing things like sectionalism and delegation.
- iii. Labourist institutions, including the trade unions.

This quite rightly led us to avoid a wholly institutional analysis of reformism and to stress that revolutionary politics and reformism could and did compete to shape daily struggles - no demand or struggle in itself being either revolutionary or reformist. On top of this analysis was later placed a series of adaptations to events. The call for a Labour vote, the tactical relationship to reformist programmes like the AES, the partial support for democratisation of the LP etc. Potentially, there is no reason why these positions cannot be made into a coherent whole. The 'Theses on Reformism' was a creditable stab at doing just this.

But one of the reasons why it has not been shaped into that coherent whole guiding the basic politics of BF, is that there are in fact, competing conceptions of what the analysis means. For Kimberley and other comrades, points i and ii of the above remain the central feature of their perspectives. They did not accept the positions on voting Labour, the AES and so on. If reformism is seen merely as one perspective in struggle, to be counterposed to 'working class autonomy', then its specific organised and institutional features, and the ideology that holds it together will be neglected. As Finn Mc'Cool points out

in his perceptive document on BF Theory in the April DB:

"What has been said about reformism as a way of doing things is extremely important, but BF hasn't devoted enough attention to developing a strategy to deal with reformism. This is because the position on class autonomy implied that reformist institutions could simply be by-passed". (p.9.)

This lies behind the argument often put forward by some in BF that discussing the Labour Party is a 'diversion' from the real tasks of class struggle. If it is agreed to be worth discussing, it tends to be for instrumental reasons - because lots of people are joining and we must argue for an alternative. What is not approached in any serious way, is why the LP is becoming a more attractive option for increasing numbers of people. This criticism by no means applies to all in BF. The mainstream opinion has for some time been attempting to come terms with the strengthening of reformism and the drift to Labour. Paul Holt's article in Revolutionary Socialism 6 - 'The Labour Left: Can we Meet the Challenge?' - deals very well with a number of these themes.

As the article points out two of the most important reasons why people - often ex-revolutionary left - are joining Labour is the search for a more effective form of activity and a more credible long-term strategy for achieving socialism than currently being provided by the Far Left. In our view BF is faced with exactly the same questions. We have no doubt that BF's politics as they have developed over the years can make a substantial contribution to the struggle for socialism. The most basic and distinctive features we take to be:

- i. Mass politics: the belief that a movement for socialism has to be created from bottom up.
- ii. Support for the organisational and political autonomy of the specifically oppressed sectors of society.
- iii. The need for a general revolutionary organisation espousing a socialist, feminist and anti-racist politics.
- iv. Transitional strategy: support for demands and ways of organising that bridge daily struggles and long-term goals - workers' plans, pre-figurative models etc - in all areas of social life.

What we do doubt is BF's ability to make that politics effective while organised as a separate entity. Doubting our organisational capacity is obviously not new, given the 1977 Project and the flirtation with the possibilities of Socialist Unity and re-groupment. Both attempts, in retrospect, were seriously flawed. But our failure to break out of limited organisational confines is waging a war of attrition on our capacity to survive and grow. BF has not substantially grown for a number of years. Our 150+ members is a poor return for the hard slog and often good politics. Any growth we've had in new branches has tended to be offset by the collapse of others and the recent growth in London is unfortunately balanced by losses in the North and other areas. Most of the 'crises' that afflict us are essentially those of trying to survive and be effective in so many areas as a small organisation, though we would not deny other dimensions, notably the sexual one.

#### THE STATE OF BIG FLAME AND THE AVAILABLE OPTIONS

Given this situation what are our options? Virtually everybody appears to agree that we cannot muddle on and hope for the best. We know that BF doesn't claim to be the embryo of the party, but it does help to know what future we've got with a bit more certainty. In our view there are three other options.

- a. A new attempt to create a wider organisation out of 'our tendency'. This appears to be the Kimberly option.
- b. A recognition of the limits of our effectiveness as an organisation, and settling for being a 'movementist' group which recruited people essentially from campaigns and movements and provided a framework of personal support (educational, social etc) and little else.
- c. Merging into a larger force.

The first we reject because it is doomed to failure; there is not an organised tendency which BF can activate to align with us as the focus. The second is viable, but we completely reject the concept of organisation involved. BF started and developed as a group that tried to organise in struggles based on a collective practice. A revolution will be created in no other way. If we have drifted from such a practice it is a sign of weakness (or more precisely a failure to re-adjust), not strength. With some reluctance we come to the third. We now believe it is time to take the plunge and consider joining the Labour Party as an organised tendency. There are of course, other larger forces, notably the SWP, but our reasons for rejecting this will become clear later.

At this point it is probably worth saying a bit more about why we do not consider it possible for BF to reform itself from within. Basically it is because we are past the organisational point of no return, or better 'diminishing returns'. This may surprise newer comrades who have joined in areas where BF is growing. We do not deny that there are points of growth, optimism and development, but it is necessary to look at the picture as a whole.

Our starting point is the North West. As the two NC members from the North West, we recently wrote a report on the Liverpool and Manchester branches (see April Information Bulletin for full detail). In summary the report said this. The Liverpool Branch is down to 10 or less active members. Those members are all good active militants, but the Branch has a decreasing ability to do anything effective as BF. This is compounded by the fact that very few of the Branch activists are women. Manchester Branch has retained its membership better, but is also stagnating and has not recruited anyone for a long time. There is the same problem of demoralisation about loss of collective impact. It should be pointed out to those who do not know, that these two branches at one time were absolutely central to many of the struggles in Manchester and Liverpool. What has changed is not so much a deterioration of our ideas, but the political environment has shifted around us. To quote from the report: "The effect of the long term recession on the working class movement and the Left has forced a polarisation between the strategies of the Labour Left (reformist transition to socialism, allied to democratisation of Labour) and the SWP (militant economism and party building). So although our politics are still capable of addressing the vital areas, we are increasingly squeezed between the major options...Militants who once related to the revolutionary organisations and often specifically to BF, are more likely to be in or around the Labour Party and the official trade union organisations. While BF militants still command tremendous respect as individuals and in a vague sense as BF, little organisational credibility comes our way".

The NC has not discussed the situation of the Yorkshire and Midland Branches as yet, but the situation is undoubtedly the hardest in the industrial areas. In London and the south the recession has not had the same impact and most Left politics appears to be movement based, which can insulate BF from some of the problems of the industrial areas. But growth alone in the South does not mean we are problem-free. From reports at the NC and talking to many comrades we are convinced that

there are many overlapping problems. Central to this is the apparent absence of collective practice. Even when members are joining and branches are healthy, we are not really anything more than a network of activists who meet and exchange experiences within a loosely defined supportive framework and political ideas. We are therefore not an effective political force and the lack of political clarity and agreement on ideas often blocks us consolidating on the broadly attractive appeal we have. These factors help explain the difficulties that Commissions have in sustaining any long-term political work, despite excellent initiatives that happen sporadically. Once again, the sheer problem of small size undermines bodies like Commissions, none of whom can be really said to be in a healthy state. A final point that has to be faced is the composition of the organisation. Even where we are growing, we are tended to recruit from professional workers in their mid-twenties to mid-thirties. A number of branches are reported to have tacitly dropped any pretence that recruiting working class people is possible and the absence of young people is very marked. In other areas the balance is unhealthily male-dominated. These facts alone are enough to make us stop and take stock of our political direction.

However, our case for considering entry into the Labour Party is not just a negative one, born of tiredness or despair. The positive case is stronger, though not without its problems. We have whittled the reasons down to three areas:

i. An expanded constituency for our politics

We have always said that not only do we not have a monopoly of political wisdom, but that people who share broadly our basic conceptions of politics are to be found in large numbers outside Big Flame. Surely it is the case that the largest number of those people are inside the Labour Party. As already noted, there has been a drift, sometimes turning into a torrent, of both movement and working class activists into the Labour Party. Many have reasons we would be sympathetic to - rejection of the vanguardism of self-proclaimed small parties, distrust and weariness of instant socialism/militancy proclaimed as socialism - and so on. A number have simply become tired of politics as they knew it, or become disillusioned that a revolutionary strategy is possible in advanced capitalism. There are many, many other reasons and motives. Some of them are very bad, opportunistic, looking for a rest home, or the most galling - ultra-lefts whose politics are so extreme that they come full circle into the only 'church' broad enough to contain them.

The most important thing to understand about these trends, is that large sections of Leftists going into Labour remain politically unstructured. In addition they may have mostly individualistic directions, purely local work or no long term idea of what they are doing inside Labour or anywhere else. There is a possibility that many will become just as weary as they were outside, especially if the slog towards success is a lot longer and harder than recent euphoric successes indicate. It is possible to therefore take the attitude that Big Flame must be the core of a consistent revolutionary pole outside the LP and recruit people when they come out, trying to do our best to attract them out in the meantime. This flawed in a number of ways. As we said earlier there is not a defined tendency ('mass politics' or otherwise) inside Labour that can be located and would relate to BF initiatives. Second, it ignores why people went into the LP in the first place - to look for a larger organisational context, to create a more realistic strategy and way of working for socialist policies etc. The result is that BF could not form such a pole of attraction. We may be liked and respected by some activists, but we

lack the very things that they are likely to be looking for, size, relevance and strategy. It is noticeable in this respect that the concluding section of Holt's article 'What Can the Revolutionary Left Offer?' is by far the weakest and mentions only good theory and personal support for militants; neither of which is sufficient.

Therefore, we believe that it would be better for us to throw our lot in with militants inside Labour. It is possible to build a sizeable non-Trotskyist, but revolutionary socialist tendency with other forces. The idea that we could simply recruit to ourselves is silly and out of the question, but there are possibilities of a more genuine re-alignment than could be effected outside, including access to far greater numbers of feminists, youth and working class people. Of course, it would be foolish to deny that when one door opens, others shut and there are bound to be militants who comrades will be able to point and say - so and so will never join the LP, or will think less of BF if we do. It is a question of weighing up the pros and cons and forces involved. In our view entry into the LP is not liquidation, but potential survival; not in a narrow organisational sense, but for important ideas worth fighting for.

What are the actual prospects for us inside Labour? We have to start by saying we do not know all that much, not in a sufficiently detailed way anyway. But a few things can be said tentatively. First, the Chartists are a group which has the closest ideas to our own of any other organised tendency. Reading their journal is not only getting a very sensitive and perceptive commentary on events in the LP (including excellent criticisms of things like the Left's conference victories), but like reading BF at our best on things like sexual politics, Ireland, workers' plans etc. Their central conference document, 'Perspectives and Priorities' by Mike Davis is a very good, detailed piece which anyone in the mainstream of BF would find it hard to find any serious disagreement with. Secondly, there are also some good people and ideas in the ILP, though as a whole the politics are to the right of our own, the majority appear to have pretty backward ideas about women and autonomous organisation and it is very bureaucratically run. Thirdly, there is a growing number of local groupings of leftists who may relate to an initiative of a more national kind if it appeared different from existing set-ups. Finally, as Tony Lane pointed out in a recent article about Merseyside\*, the largest tendency - Militant - dominates largely through default and many people are heartily sick of their dogmatic sloganeering and methods. We would not at this stage presume to say what initiatives were desirable, only that some serious ones are possible.

#### ii. The seriousness of the political situation

The balance of political forces at the moment is in its most volatile and significant state since the war. It is widely recognised that the post-war Keynesian consensus has broken down. The association of that breakdown with Labour accelerated the shift to the right and the emergence of Thatcherism; a phenomena which has obviously international dimensions. Monetarism, the attack on social services and the wide ranging reference to a series of reactionary moral themes; all constitute a radical right initiative which is far from being a spent force, despite policy disasters. The breakage of the consensus has not stopped there. First, it has accentuated the trend towards radical reformism in the Labour Party and the strengthening of the AES as the only serious alternative to monetarism. Second, it has forced Labour's right wing to re-assess its practice and combined with organisational defeats inside the LP, has resulted in part of their forces forming the SDP. The fact that this is not just an organisational schism is

\* In Marxism Today.

indicated in the way that the SDP has appropriated a number of populist themes which break with their statist/managerialist past and are sufficiently radical on the surface to attract people like Sue Slipman.

The result is that we are faced with a major double assault on socialism. Of course the last Labour Government was not socialist and of course there are different and superior conceptions of socialism than those of the Labour Left - but in terms of British political life and public consciousness, the next election will be presented as a choice between radical right, moderate centre and extreme socialism. It is possible to duck out of the consequences of that situation by taking an attitude of 'it's their problem, the real socialists are best off out of it'. We refuse to ignore the choices open to us as defined by the overall balance of political forces, because it's our problem too. A decisive defeat for Labour at the next election, especially combined with a strong showing for the SDP, would shift the centre of gravity to the right, perhaps irreversibly. The space left for socialist politics of any kind would be significantly reduced. We would argue that it is a priority at the present time to strengthen a left-socialist trend in British politics and that means an alliance with radical reformism, whilst subjecting it to a revolutionary critique and building an alternative inside and outside the Labour Party. It is not a question of putting all our eggs in the basket of a 1984 election win for Labour. They may well lose, merely through SDP vote-splitting. It is a case of the scale of events and the significance of events at this level.

The state level is not the only measure of the seriousness of the political situation. On the shop floor, in the communities, in the autonomous movements; there are equally important problems and questions. But they need to be situated within the national context and this is mainly a question of perspectives and policies, which we now turn to.

### iii. The centrality of a radical reform programme

Reading some of the entrust Left's comments (particularly IMG and Workers' Action) on recent developments in the LP, the issue of democratisation is made the central one, both in terms of significance and why people should join. We think they are significant, but not the central question. Firstly, the changes are limited in their scope and democratic nature. Second, they are more fragile than recognised generally - the balance has undoubtedly shifted to the centre-right since the SDP split and the Left is on the defensive. The next conference may well reverse the leadership decision. Third, democratisation moves are elevated to such importance by the more naive elements, that they come to believe that once this has been got right, a socialist programme will have no obstacle to being implemented. The power of Capital and the mass mobilisation of the working class recede into the distance.

The question of politics is the first and foremost one. In terms of discussing the LP, this means Alternative Economic Strategies (AES). These were discussed and defined in the Conference debates, so we are taking some basic knowledge as read. An important starting point is to avoid referring to the AES, as there are a variety of versions some more radical than others and adopted in different ways by unions and LP bodies. What we are really talking about is an area of debate about issues and strategy concerning a transition to socialism.

Big Flame's formal characterisation of the AES, adopted at the last conference is broadly sound. This described the existing models of AES as insupportable as a whole, while supporting critically particular

measures that were pro-working class. Furthermore we recognised that an AES provided a useful and necessary context for stimulating independent working class demands and action. Yet, we need to take it further. It is not enough to discuss existing AES's, but whether we consider a transitional strategy of reforms has a role to play in putting socialism on the agenda of British politics. We think it has.

Critics of an AES, like those in the SWP, are wrong to describe the emergent AES's as simply a re-run, dressed-up Keynesianism, based on a concept of spending our way out of the crisis. Regardless of any weaknesses, there has been a serious attempt to think out a reform programme, starting from conditions of capitalist crisis, which would be part of a transitional strategy. Anyone who doubts this should have a read of something like 'The AES: A Labour Movement Response to the Economic Crisis', by the CSE London Working Group. A different layer of socialists are trying to grapple with many of the same problems as many of us in Big Flame - how do we get the working class movement out of the downturn and out of the ghettos of labourism and purely economic militancy.

A document on AES by a leading feminist in the Labour Party, recently circulated on the National Committee, pointed out the movement towards AES was part of "an attempt to reconceptualise both the objectives and the social base of socialism", along with feminist and new left thinking about pre-figurative politics. While AES-thinking developed out of the experience of the breakdown of the post-war social-democratic consensus and the problems of Labour government; it shares a concern to go beyond the sterile opposition between reform and revolution. For too long, revolutionary socialists have been content to present the route to socialism as a combination of escalating day-to-day militancy, with propaganda about the glorious future. Even those entrists in the LP do not escape this framework. They only relate to reforms as a means of exposing reformists. IMG, Workers' Action and others are uninterested in alternative strategies and there is no bigger opponent of AES than the Militant group.

As the crisis has deepened, so the above combination of militancy plus propaganda has become more and more inadequate. It cannot put socialism on the agenda in this country, because it fails to deal concretely with the general organisation of society through policies that relate to immediate and medium-term issues that effect peoples' lives. If we recognise that socialism is not an immediate possibility, then policies must include measures which can be implemented at the level of local or national government. Take the example of the fight against unemployment. The SWP magazine, 'Socialist Review', recently carried a discussion about the recent defeat at Linwood, where the workforce voted 2-1 to accept closure despite the biggest promise of support and backing ever given to a struggle.

The arguments are too detailed to summarise here. But Deason and Cliff argued that the main problem was the inadequate level of organisation in the plant and other factories. Smaller units of organisation were needed given the bureaucratisation of workplace structures, Cliff adding that 'The problem is the disappearance of sectional militancy'. While this dimension has some importance, it is a grotesque inversion of political priorities. Peter Bain, a senior TGWU steward in the SWP was nearer the truth when he identified the main problem as:

"We had to argue that it doesn't matter if the boss makes money. If there is no profit then the government will have to pay up because we have the muscle to force them to give us the right to work".

This is a rather limited argument, when it is recognised how few other

sections of society could resolve their problems with 'muscle', but that is not the main problem. For even those with that muscle are seldom using it, and the reason for this is that most people will only struggle when they are convinced that there is an alternative to things like cuts or unemployment. That alternative cannot be based on appeals to militancy or class solidarity alone, nor on socialism in the abstract. It must relate to policies that can be implemented at a society-wide level, hence the importance of a radical reform programme. This is not a question of postponing independent struggles until such a programme is implemented, but using that programme to inform struggles, to build peoples' confidence in winning and preparedness to fight.

It is also important to recognise the importance of such policies in building a movement which can re-create some vision of socialism. The experience of Eastern Europe, social democracy and a Far Left that refuses to discuss radical reforms, has almost obliterated that vision. Rather than socialism having a mass popular legitimacy, it has become identified with at best, militancy, and at worst statism and authoritarianism. This vision must cover all areas of social life, by indicating through policies, what a socialist society would be like. A good example of a move in this direction is the recent pamphlet by Jean Coussins and Anna Coote, 'The Family in the Firing Line: A Discussion document on Family Policy'. Noting that it is factual nonsense to "pretend that a family policy could be usefully tailored to the archetypal nuclear family", (p.9.), they outline a series of useful perspectives and demands that could strengthen the level of material support for working class families, while encouraging the maximum of choice of life-styles and social facilities for adults and children. Whatever its weaknesses, this pamphlet is worth a thousand abstract calls for the 'abolition of the family'.

None of the above comments is meant to indicate that any existing form of AES is adequate. In fact, one of the problems is the concentration of alternative policies on a narrowly defined economic level. As a consequence, it fails to incorporate many of the social issues raised by feminism and the new left. The previously-mentioned feminist document points out that concepts like full employment, public spending and rising living standards are dealt with too unproblematically, failing to relate to the divisions in the working class. These problems and further developments in policy tend to be left to a 'second stage' of alternatives.

These criticisms are additional to the more standard ones of statism, nationalism etc. But it is worth looking more closely at some of the problems of implementation, given this is the terrain on which tactical relationships are most important. Put briefly, the strategy of the more radical version of the AES goes something like this - full employment can be moved back toward by expanding demand and living standards. But demand management will not be sufficient in a crisis period, so there is a need to control inflation through price and import controls, and through extension of state control over private and public capital. Instrumental in this will be a National Enterprise Board, Planning Agreements, control over movements of capital, withdrawal from the EEC etc. To mobilise working class backing and integrate the labour movement into the programme, limiting right-wing sabotage, democratisation of the media, civil service/government and workplaces, will be developed.

There are numerous problems with this conception. It does not recognise the deep-rootedness of the crisis, which is presented in a narrow, technical sense - as a lack of will to invest. In addition reformist



illusions are widespread concerning the extent to which the ruling class would tolerate radical measures. It is highly unlikely that Capital would accept the terms of an AES, as it would both diminish their powers and lower their profitability in a high-wage, price-controlled economy. The array of means open to national and international Capital to sabotage such policies is very wide, though the actual measures will depend on the political circumstances, including the level of working class mobilisation.

But it is insufficient to sit back with smug satisfaction and decry the inevitable failure of reformism without having any equivalent policies to put in its place. We have to accept the challenge and the political space AES opens up, and do two things. First, subject existing programmes to a revolutionary socialist and feminist critique, not of their existence, but particular form. That is, our objection is not to a program of reforms, but to reformist programmes. Secondly, we must develop a tactical relationship to existing programmes that emphasises rank and file counter-planning and organisation, in a tactical intersection of base and state level struggles, as the 1980 Conference policy outlines. Such an orientation would open up the greatest possibilities of reaching militants and radicalising struggles in the next few years.

#### JOINING THE LABOUR PARTY: THE DEBATE AND THE CONSEQUENCES

The quickest way to put people off joining the LP, is to hear the normal reasons put forward for entry. These normally consist of some variation on the theme that the LP is the 'mass party of the working class', outside of which it is possible to do nothing and where everyone is a 'fringe' element. We utterly reject such ideas and we recognise the dangers of incorporation into bureaucratic, machine politics that is outlined by Holt and other comrades. But BF has always argued that the nature of an organisation flows less from its structures, than from its politics and relationship to struggle. It is just as mechanistic as Trotskyism to argue that a certain course of events is inevitable inside the LP.

Surely it depends mainly on the choices we would make. Such choices about how work in the LP would be conducted need more discussion with comrades who have experiences in this sphere. But once again, some tentative points can be made. First of all, any serious attempt would have to be based on a collectively thought-out perspective. We know that many comrades are coming round to the view that some work inside the LP is inevitable and useful and we are sympathetic to their reluctance to commit everyone and everything to the LP. But the question is how to avoid this whilst maintaining a coherent strategy.

The solution of developing a policy of dual membership will not fulfill this condition effectively. It contains the danger of BF's political activity being divided into incompatible parts, with corresponding confusion in and between branches, commissions, the newspaper and other publications. In addition, it is the kind of policy which is exactly designed to get the backs up of LP members. Sending a portion of members in, is the kind of 'raiding party' that we've always condemned, it involves deceit and further confusion for all concerned. The better solution is to have everyone join the LP, but ensure a division of labour which maintains a high proportion of independent political activity. Like other tendencies, we would have to maintain an organisation around a journal/paper of some kind, though exactly what form this would take depends on whether we could re-align ourselves with the Chartists and other forces. While everyone would be required to have an area of

political activity, it obviously makes sense to have some comrades take on particular work in wards, CLP's, GMC's etc. Others would have a much lower commitment to actual LP work, compared to activity in TOM, unions, the womens' movement and so on. Though of course the two spheres will be connected by common campaigns and activity.

This kind of orientation is necessary because our overall aim remains that of building a mass socialist, feminist and anti-racist movement in the working class. This cannot be done by reducing everything to the LP, as many in it do. But it appears to us, that a political tendency in the LP has the best chance of building such a movement, at the present time. We do not take a principled position on permanent work in the LP or against independent revolutionary organisation. Indeed, we recognise the importance of the work being done by our sister organisations in Europe who are outside the socialist and Communist formations; and would wish to retain those links. Nor do we believe that it is possible to transform the LP into a revolutionary socialist party. What it is actually possible to do requires a lot more thinking, talking and practice.

We are aware that any combination of arrangements will not convince some, perhaps many, BF comrades of the usefulness of LP activity. But it is wrong and self-defeating to try and maintain a formal organisational unity in BF, that is not matched by any unity of purpose. Comrades have to assess whether a move towards the LP is, as Kimberly suggests, 'the biggest mistake of the decade', or whether it is an opportunity that deserves serious consideration. The answer will be an important factor deciding our future.

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May 1981.

The day school on the LP is obviously not a decision-making one, so this document is put forward as part of a debate which we recognise is an important and lengthy process. Although the two writers of this document were supporters of Tendency One, we wish to make clear that it has been written independently. Tendency One will be circulating notice that it has formally dissolved in the near future. It would be fair to say that there would not have been unity on the contents of this document. As signatories of the document, we will be organising some future meeting, but its form and content will be conditioned by discussion at the day school.