

platform

of the

left?

tendency

PREAMBLE TO THE PLATFORM OF THE LEFT TENDENCY.

In accordance with the Constitution of the ORA the Left Tendency organizes itself in opposition to the following ORA positions carried at National Conference:

1. The Tendency declares its opposition to the position on Ireland.
2. The Tendency declares its opposition to the position on delegate conferences.
3. The Tendency declares its opposition to the position on Libertarian Struggle.
4. The Tendency declares its opposition to 'bureaucratic federalism'.

The following platform is presented to the ORA through the Internal Bulletin. We invite further signatures to the Platform from comrades who wish to join the Tendency. The conditions of membership of the Tendency are: agreement with the Aims and Principles of the ORA; payment of subscriptions to the ORA; activity in an ORA group or on behalf of ORA. These are the conditions of membership of the ORA as a whole. Further conditions of membership are full agreement with the following platform, and the payment of a £1 sub. to the Left Tendency.

Tasks of the Left Tendency.

The Tendency has no intention of acting as a 'conscience' of the organization. Our aim is to become the majority group within the ORA. Consequently, we will fight for the rejection of the four incorrect positions above, and for the full implementation of the proposals in this platform. To this end we will use our full constitutional rights. The Tendency will write articles advocating its politics for Libertarian Struggle - articles which may be rejected only on literary grounds or if they conflict with Aims and Principles. The Tendency has elected Al McNeillie (Lancaster) to the editorial board of the Libertarian Communist Review, and Martin Ralph (Lancaster) as delegate to the first two meetings of the Delegate Conference. The Tendency will attempt to recruit new members into the ORA on the basis of this platform. The treasurer/membership secretary will be supplied with copies of the Platform. We insist that she a copy to every new ORA member. We will fight for our politics in the following ways:

1. Articles in ORA's open publications.
2. Articles in the Internal Bulletin.
3. Left Tendency week-end schools and other meetings.
4. The Tendency will submit a draft Aims and Principles to the special conference in January next year.
5. The Tendency will submit a Draft Programme to Delegate Conference and to National Conference.
6. The Tendency will publish pamphlets and leaflets.

Signatories to the Platform of the Left Tendency:

(Leeds)
(Leeds)
Manchester)
Bristol)
(Lancaster)
(Lancaster)
(Lancaster)
(Lancaster)

IRELAND: IN DEFENCE OF REVOLUTIONARY PRINCIPLES.

? The position adopted on Ireland at the last ORA Conference is shameful and a complete abdication of revolutionary principles. The discussion that took place indicated the organization's appalling ignorance not only about Ireland (where not one cogent argument was presented against Cde. Thornberry's analysis), but also about Imperialism and the nature of anti-Imperialist struggles. In order to avoid taking a principled position the authors of the amendment to the original motion managed (in the space of half an hour!) to concoct a whole new theory of Imperialism. This gained support because certain comrades were genuinely worried about certain tactics of the IRA. *did not understand "Imperialism"*

The relationship between Britain and Ireland is an Imperialist relationship. It is Imperialist because the entire Irish economy is geared to serve the needs of the British ruling-class. British capitalists own the vast majority of Irish industry North and South of the border. Other capitalist powers - Germany, France, Japan and the U.S. - have investments in Ireland, but British capital is the dominant one and the controlling one. The Southern Irish bourgeoisie is a comprador bourgeoisie whose interests are, and always have been, tied to the interests of British capitalism. When the British ruling-class moves, the Southern Irish bourgeoisie moves in step, or falls out of step at its peril. Examples of this are numerous - eg. the catastrophic 'Trade War' in the 1930's, entry into the EEC etc. Consequently, the Southern Irish State is a client state. Because the Coca Cola company has a factory in Ireland, it does not mean that Ireland is a society in transition from being the victim of Imperialism to being the victim of 'International Monopoly Capitalism' (which 'knows no country' - another novel little homespun theory whose novelty is exceeded only by its stupidity. Presumably capital is now centralized in outer space). Of course Imperialism does change, and has changed, its form - eg. from direct colonial exploitation to neo-colonialism, dependent on economic rather than direct political control). It has not, however, changed its nature. Imperialist exploitation is still an essential feature of capitalism.

Non understanding of Imperialism
port + abt
class no boundaries
spheres of influence
? On a world scale, anti-Imperialist struggles are a progressive phenomenon. They weaken the Imperialist states and, especially in the current epoch, they intensify the the crisis of capitalism. Of course, national liberation struggles are not direct struggles for socialism, and the likelihood of them leading to the immediate establishment of a libertarian communist society is remote to say the least. To refuse to advance support to them on this ground is utopianism of the worst kind. It is the duty of all serious revolutionaries to support all genuine national liberation struggles against Imperialism. They must be seen as steps towards social revolution.

?? The struggle in Ireland is an anti-Imperialist struggle. This the Fleming/Kibble Theory would deny. It states that the essential problem facing the Irish working-class is the antagonism between 'old style Imperialism' and the new dynamic 'international monopoly capitalism' (which knows no country!). The 'theory' states that a united Ireland is in the interests of International Monopoly Capitalism. Therefore the IRA is fighting in the interests of International Monopoly Capitalism - but more disturbingly, since our organization demands 'British troops out', so are we! The Fleming/Kibble Theory has led the Organization of Revolutionary Anarchists taking a principled stand in support of International Monopoly Capitalism. Where the Aims and Principles states that 'ORA is internationalist' no member of the Left Tendency realized that this was the form of internationalism being advocated.

A united Ireland is undoubtedly in the long term interests of British Imperialism (perhaps in their confused way this is what Cdes. Fleming and Kibble are trying to say.) But this is the case only if such unity can be achieved on advantageous terms for British capitalism - ie. an even closer integration of the Irish and British economies and an ever more ruthless

Imperialist exploitation of the Irish people. Any considered analysis of the struggle in Ireland shows that this option is not open (a) because of the intractable position of large sections of the Protestant working-class who demand a return of Stormont and all the trappings of the Orange State, and (b) because the nature of the Republican opposition depends as much on the overthrow of the Southern government as on the expulsion of the British from the North.

The attempts of the British ruling-class to impose its own solution - steps towards a united Ireland via the Council of Ireland, power-sharing in the Assembly, referenda on the Border etc. - are doomed to failure. They depend on the acquiescence of the Protestant working-class and the military defeat of the IRA as well as the political defeat of Republicanism. The political and social demands of both wings of the Republican movement are confused and often contradictory. However, one thing is quite clear: they cannot accept a united Ireland on British Imperialism's terms, and certainly not a deal cooked up by Fitt, Faulkner, Heath and Cosgrave. The Republican movement is specifically anti-Imperialist, though its 'socialism' is of a peculiarly distorted type. This it is our duty to criticize. An independent capitalist Ireland free from domination by British Imperialism, is impossible. If the struggle for national self-determination is to be successful it must develop a revolutionary socialist perspective by linking the anti-imperialist struggle in the North to the class battles being fought against the same enemy in the South. Only a revolutionary socialist perspective has any hope of attracting support from the Protestant working-class. *(at this stage isn't this utopian?)*

evah

The Left Tendency demands that the organization reverses the indefensible position on Ireland adopted at the Autumn 1973 Conference. We insist that the organization take a principled anti-Imperialist stance, and engages in Irish solidarity work around the following demands:

1. End internment; release all Irish political prisoners in Britain and Ireland.
2. British troops out of Ireland.
- *3. Solidarity with the IRA and all other groups fighting British Imperialism
4. Self-determination for the Irish people.
5. For a United Socialist Ireland.

* Expansion on point 3 (above).

In concrete terms, in our Irish work in this country, we argue that the IRA is correct in waging a military campaign against British occupation forces and their agents (The RUC, UDR, UDA, UVF, UFF, and all other right-wing para-military organizations). We fight against the chauvinist tendencies in the British working-class movement, and the liberal and pacifist tendencies in the revolutionary anarchist movement. We engage in United Front activities with other left-wing and Republican groups in this country on the basis of the principled positions that the Left Tendency advocates. We publicize the struggle in our journals, and consistently advocate national self-determination for the Irish people.

DELEGATE CONFERENCE: For the 'ORGANIZATIONAL PLATFORM OF
THE LIBERTARIAN COMMUNISTS'.

The organization has an incorrect position on Delegate Conferences.

The Left Tendency objects to:

- 1) The compulsory mandation of delegates.
- 2) The method of mandation.
- 3) The practice of monthly rotation of delegates.

*What is a mandate?
What is a delegate?*

Conference has mis understood the role of Delegate Conference within the organization. At present, delegates must be mandated on all questions raised. Local group votes for and against a proposal must be recorded and cast at D.C. The total of votes from groups determines the position. A delegate has no need to argue a single political point, as his local group has already decided the issue. The role of a delegate is that of a postman who carries recorded ballots to different geographical points each month. The postman-delegate, according to Conference, 'should' be rotated. Because the D.C. will function as a postal referendum, there is in reality no need for a meeting to take place. The Left Tendency cannot see any great value in a D.C. that poses no major function beyond that of stock taker and vote counter.

To carry out these small tasks, delegates travel from all over the country, spending an overall large sum of money and time. A waste of money and time in organizing an inefficient postal referendum is the essence of the achievement of the last National Conference on the question of the D.C. Was this the role of the D.C. envisaged by the membership? The Left Tendency states that the D.C. must have an entirely different role. We wish to see it develop as a democratically controlled leadership as envisaged in the 'Organizational Platform of the Libertarian Communists, (the only national ORA pamphlet that has been produced). The tasks that the D.C. already has, and the tasks that the Left Tendency advocates that it have, are too important to the future of ORA to be placed in the hands of those who are politically inexperienced. We believe that the D.C. should be composed of the most politically advanced, competent, and committed comrades.

THE TASKS OF THE DELEGATE CONFERENCE.

1) Administration.

✓ Co-ordinating work that concerns previous decisions. Sorting out details of production of literature etc.

2) Motions and political discussion.

But group discussion can!

The D.C. must be able to take decisions after full discussion. Local discussion within groups is totally inadequate and no inter-group discussion can occur from one D.C. monthly meeting to the next. From the time of a motion appearing in the bulletin to the time of delegate conference there is no possibility of replying to motions with amendments, criticism, and replies to criticism. What would take 30 minutes for delegates to discuss would take up ten issues of the bulletin.

But no limit on size of bulletin

Discussion will be limited, and when the D.C. does discuss a motion it will be of no consequence. The mandate having been given, there is no room for amendments, criticism is irrelevant, discussion is fruitless - it cannot alter a single comma of the motion; the referendum process has to be put into effect. There is absolutely no room for manoeuvre - no room to be convinced by political argument.

The Left Tendency believes that delegates should be free to vote according to the results of discussion at D.C. Local groups can recall a delegate whom they consider to have acted in an inappropriate manner. The libertarian principles of democratic control via report back and recall give room for discussion which the present bureaucratic formula

fails to do. We oppose the idea that delegates should carry localistic group ballots. Sending one delegate for four or majority of four members covers the difference of opinion within a group. 'Delegates should be given as a necessity an area of confidence in which to make discussion'. We can now clearly understand why the CNT had this printed on their membership card.

3) Continuity and Libertarian organization and learning.

Some comrades substitute a demoralizing distrust of all their fellow-comrades for principles of libertarian organization. These members suspect their fellow militants to the extent of seeking to enforce their bureaucratic expectancy of punishment with an unquestionable automatic suspension of civil rights within the organization. Rotation followed by a punitive detachment for 'failure' is the rule of thumb laid down by the last national conference. Those who backed these measures do not realize that it is their chaotic notion of rotation that causes the failure that they then punish. The Left Tendency will fight these measures and their cause - the idea that rotation is a necessary part of the process of political education.

Rotation does not give anyone the time to learn a particular job thoroughly. The idea is a product of a 'sink or swim' theory. You are rotated into a job and you can sink or swim. If you swim - fine; but if you sink punitive detachment awaits you. The monthly rotation of delegates to the D.C. means that each month a set of new faces appears and each time they will have to find their own way - or, in fact, not find their own way. No continuity of work as there are different delegates each month. It will be impossible to write collectively draft programmes, draft manifestoes, or draft pamphlets. It will be impossible to present a continuity of editorials in 'Libertarian Struggle'. Hundreds of these incidents will occur because new delegates will forget or will not be briefed about the details of the previous D.C. By the time of the third or fourth batch of new faces meeting they will have lost sight of the intentions of the first. There will be little continuity of effort or of campaigns. The Left Tendency believes that the same delegates should be elected to D.C. over a specific period (at least six months). It must be unusual for delegates to be changed: and when that happens it should be by the process of recall.

*continuity
in totality
of ORA*

The Left Tendency therefore demand:

1. A Delegate Conference that takes on the function of the political leadership of the organization.

2. That the D.C. have the following tasks:

- a) The implementation of national conference decisions.
- b) The formulation of policies and the initiation of activities where National Conference has not taken a position.
- c) The supervision of the political life of the group:
 - i) Drawing up an internal education programme.
 - ii) Acting as a publications committee.
 - iii) The general supervision of Libertarian Struggle, and, pending the election of an editorial board, the writing of editorials for the paper.
 - iv) The drafting of a programme for presentation to National Conference.

3. In order to carry out these tasks, the whole present form of the D.C. must be changed. We propose the following:

- a) The abolition of rotation of delegates.
- b) The abolition of compulsory mandation.
- c) The appointment by National Conference of a non-voting secretary/convenor for the D.C., the appointment to be for not more than two years.

4. The rights of organized minority tendencies must always be protected.

- a) Organized minority tendencies entitled to at least one delegate.
- b) They are entitled to further delegates in proportion to their membership.

LIBERTARIAN STRUGGLE: The fight for a revolutionary paper.

So far of divorce & subse...

'Libertarian Struggle' has many faults and the ORA did little to rectify them at the last conference in Manchester. In order to combat what certain comrades referred to as 'an uneven development of consciousness' the practice of editorial rotation has been retained. The Left Tendency rejects the notion that to edit a paper one weekend every six or seven months is in any way fundamental to political education. On the contrary, this tactic fosters the kind of localism that has been so disastrous to the British Anarchist movement in the past. The term 'uneven development of consciousness' and its 'solution' - the rotation of tasks - are catch-phrases that the organization has accepted with insufficient thought. We believe that what is meant by this pompous phrase is that certain comrades are more or more politically developed and more experienced than others - that there is a variation in the level of political education. This is a natural occurrence. Obviously, if ORA is to grow we will always have inexperienced and politically undeveloped comrades in the organization. Practically every new member is in that position. The solution to this natural problem is a thorough programme of internal education combined with ongoing united activity. Political development occurs through discussion, debate, and struggle.

only subtle!

The Left Tendency believes that the rotation of tasks does not help to develop inexperienced comrades. At best it is an extremely limited and unsatisfactory way of involving people in the organization. At worst it is undemocratic and an active reason for holding back the growth of the organization. The rotating editorship of 'Libertarian Struggle' is a case in point. In practice what it means is that once every six or seven months members of a group will edit the paper over a weekend. We cannot seriously expect this to combat uneven political development. Past experience shows that it does not. On the contrary, it reinforces it. For example, when Lancaster and Manchester jointly edited the paper it reflected the viewpoint of comrades who now compose the Left Tendency. It consequently expressed what we hold to be correct ideas. When Glasgow produced the paper, it reflected what seems to be universally recognized as incorrect ideas. The political consciousness of neither group has been changed. It has not been enhanced or 'evened out'. We have through a sordid and unnecessary process of internal recrimination - and worst of all we still have a bad paper and have learnt little from the experience.

When groups are at a low stage of political development they will produce a bad paper. The opposite in general applies. Having a good paper one month, a bad one the next, and an indifferent one the month after does not and cannot 'even out consciousness' or develop it in any way. It does, however, have serious consequences outside the organization. Our paper could and should be a major recruiting weapon. It should be the place where the incisiveness of our analysis and the relevance of revolutionary anarchist ideas are lucidly expressed. We are judged on our paper more than anything. To be as inconsistent as we are, to produce a paper without coherent direction is disastrous for the organization. It merely discredits us in the eyes of the serious working-class militants that we should be trying to attract. Editorial rotation is a built-in device that makes the problem next to impossible to solve.

Both?

The Left Tendency rejects the tactic of rotation. We advocate the principle of recall. The Tendency believes that vital tasks like the editing of 'Libertarian Struggle' must be given to those most competent to do them. We stand for democratic control of the paper by Conference. Regular election, recall and re-election is a better guarantee of democratic control than the present system. It could and should lead to a better paper, of higher quality, of more consistent politics - a paper able to serve the working-class, to influence militants in an Anarchist direction, and to recruit members to ORA.

The Left Tendency therefore calls for:

1. The abolition of editorial rotation.
2. The election of an editorial board by National Conference.
3. The general supervision of the paper by Delegate Conference.

LIBERTARIAN COMMUNISM OR BUREAUCRATIC FEDERALISM?

The Left Tendency opposes the penal clauses tacked on to the end of various resolutions passed at conference. The people who were most vociferous in advocating automatic loss of membership rights for comparatively trivial infringements (like writing a letter to 'Freedom'), describe themselves as 'Federalists' (sic). In fact they are dyed-in-the-wool, hidebound bureaucrats of a type who would feel more at home in Stalinist organizations. ✓

The bureaucratic mentality of these people cannot see beyond administrative solutions to political problems. If the North London comrades have a problem with Pete Newell's involvement with 'Freedom', they should attempt to sort it out themselves. Instead, they've prevented us from defending ourselves when attacked in 'Freedom'. *!!! Which is the totality of this admin. solution.*

The bureaucratic federalists have also imposed punitive measures in their notions concerning reports to the Internal Bulletin. They place great emphasis on I.B. reports and are determined to force groups to write them. Typically, they have no notion of what the I.B. should be used for. The Left Tendency thinks that the I.B. has an important role to play in developing the organization's theoretical and practical work and will use it for that purpose. However, we fail to see the purpose of such contributions as the following: (NorthLondon report 25/9/73 in Nov. 73 I.B.)

Meetings Sec. Did not attend due to housing difficulties, but had good time to submit a report and DID NOT. It was pointed out that we are to hold a pre-conference meeting this Sunday at 1 pm. 10b Broadway Parade Hornsey N.8. (This is Elaine's place and it is hard to find as it is off the main road, so it was agreed comrades will take turns standing by Crouch End Clocktower, which is where we shall meet up, so don't be late, you might get lost!)"

Such stunning news as 'one comrade owes 50p' adds greatly to the development of revolutionary consciousness! We do not see any usefulness in the lengthy and tedious reports submitted by the N.London group. We are even more opposed to the idea that every other group should emulate their idiocies.

The Left Tendency does believe in a disciplined organisation. It does not believe in a bureaucratic one. No other group that we know of - Anarchist, Leninist, Stalinist, Social Democratic or Fascist - has automatic loss of membership rights for the slightest deviation from the bureaucratic norm.

The Left Tendency therefore advocates:

1. That all penalty clauses passed at the last conference be dropped,
2. That all transgressions of conference decisions be treated on their individual merits,
3. Only local groups and conference have the right to suspend members,
4. Only N.C. has the right to expel members.

