

TOWARDS THE I.L.P. EASTER CONFERENCE

I.—Trends in the I.L.P.

By ERIC WHALLEY

(Chairman of I.L.P. Affiliation Committee)

IN this period of rapid capitalist decline, the forms of the working-class movement are subject to rapid changes, and forces inside the various sections are often transformed from progressive to reactionary influences overnight. This phenomenon is explainable by the fact that the changes in the forms of the working-class movement are spontaneous reflections of the rising wave of militancy in the ranks of the working class, that are prevented from *progressively* moving to their logical conclusion—Communism—because they *are* spontaneous and are not based on an understanding of the requirements of revolutionary struggle.

This by no means infers that the waves of militancy arising in organisations that have been the strongholds of reformism, can be disregarded as a passing phase, on the contrary it means that those workers inside these awakened sections have an important task, the task of bringing these unconscious forces into consciousness and directing them to what must be their final goal—Communism.

The I.L.P. affords striking confirmation of this analysis. At the Bradford Conference the I.L.P. broke with the Labour Party of which it had been the main support for 40 years, and at Derby completed its organisational break with reformism by withdrawing from the Labour and Socialist International.

The steps taken by the I.L.P. reflected the rising militancy of the working class, and the growing disgust at the betrayal of the working class by the reformist leaders. Disaffiliation was the result of a series of very bitter political experiences of the rank-and-file of the I.L.P.

In the process of this organisational break with reformism, the I.L.P. shed a number of its leaders, but those who constitute the present leadership, gave nominal support to both decisions. It was soon to be made clear, however, that the acquiescence of the leaders in the formal break with reformism, was not an indication of their acceptance of Marxist-Leninism, the basis of the revolutionary movement. There was a positive proposal at the Derby conference to approach the Comintern with a view to the I.L.P.'s co-operation in their work, and this proposal

met with the vigorous opposition of Paton, *speaking on behalf of the N.A.C.* Paton sought to condemn the Third and Second Internationals alike as bankrupt and reactionary, and suggested, as an alternative, to co-operation with the C.I., continued association with the Left Socialist groups, with the view to the formation of an all-embracing International :

The basis of co-operation between the I.L.P. and the other " Left " Socialist parties was the attempt to break down the barriers which now existed between the great mass organisations attached to the L.S.I. (Labour and Socialist International) and the various sections attached to the 3rd. (Paton, at the Annual Conference, as reported in the *New Leader*, April 21, 1933.)

The conference passed judgment on this infamous theory of equal blame and the reactionary proposal for a new International by declaring for Co-operation with the Comintern. This decision marked the end of any " progressive " trend in the I.L.P. leadership ; they had exhausted their " revolutionary " fervour by organisational breaks with the Labour Party and the L.S.I. Since that decision, the majority of the leadership has had a reactionary influence on the I.L.P. The spirit of Derby has been violated, and all the theories of " equal blame " resurrected by Brockway, whilst the " Left " Socialist groups hold their toy pistol at the head of the Comintern : " If there is no change in your tactics and organisation. . . "

This, in spite of, and in defiance of, the conference decision.

The Bradford and Derby conference decisions reflected the growth of militancy in the working class, and the growing disillusionment of the workers with the reformist leaders, but the organisation of this militancy and its direction towards specific issues, was the work of the Revolutionary Policy Committee (R.P.C.), which was the most advanced section of the Party.

Since Derby, however, what has been the attitude of the R.P.C. ? After the Derby Conference we saw organised opposition to the Conference decision, for which the R.P.C. had fought so vigorously, from two wings : (1) the Sandhamites, who, nakedly reactionary, demanded the withdrawal of the I.L.P. from United Front activity with the C.P. ; and (2) the Brockwayites, whose " criticism," whilst dressed in the second-hand clothes, provided by marine store dealer, Mr. Trotsky, was objectively the same as the Sandhamites. The policies of both groups were calculated to lead the I.L.P. rank-and-file back, by the nose, to the Labour Party and the L.S.I. from which they had just emerged with so much difficulty. One by the direct route (Sandham is not as subtle as he might be), and the other via the Two-and-a-half International.

In the face of this double offensive the national R.P.C. has been silent, and no attempt has been made to organise the revolutionaries against

the reactionaries and to direct a campaign towards closer association with the Comintern. Time after time have slanders of the C.I. been left unanswered by the R.P.C. The machinery of the R.P.C. has been at a standstill. The offensive was taken by the reactionary wing and no opposition was forthcoming, and it was in the face of this barrage of anti-C.I. propaganda allowed to pass unchallenged, that much of the valuable ground gained at Derby was lost. The real gravity of the R.P.C.'s error is made clear by the fact that a large number of I.L.P. members did not respond to the appeals of the Brockwayites and the Sandhamites, *but left the Party, confused and perplexed*. This tragic position was only made possible by the failure of the revolutionary wing to give a clear lead and to mobilise support in defence of the Derby decision.

It was on the basis of these facts, and the recognition of the urgency of the situation, that the affiliation Committee was formed.

The Affiliation Committee has published a manifesto¹ drawing attention to the Derby Conference decision, and the "attacks" on the C.I. appearing in the *New Leader*. Reference is made in the manifesto to the good work of the R.P.C. prior to the Easter conference, but also to its lack of activity in the vital period *since* Derby, and states its policy clearly in this paragraph :

We feel that the issues facing the international working class are so urgent and vital, that any further delay will be a crime against the working class, and will reduce our party to impotence.

We have, therefore, formed a committee to put the issue clearly, by working for affiliation of the I.L.P. to the C.I.

Immediately after the preparation of this manifesto, the National R.P.C. evinced signs of a return to life by the publication of Bulletin, No. 10, "The Struggle Moves On."

Were we to receive at last from the R.P.C. a clear lead on the issue of affiliation ?

In this Bulletin the R.P.C. raises a number of "objections" to the strategy and tactics of the C.I., and it is important that they should be examined.

On page 5, par. 2, the Bulletin states :

The C.I. has taken the view that the social-democratic leaders are social fascists, or, in other words, persons who, being in themselves conscious and deliberate allies of the ruling class, equally consciously and equally deliberately deceive the workers in the organisations which those leaders control, in order to hand them over complete to the ruling class

We have endeavoured to state earlier in this article our estimation of the reformist leadership, and in the light of that estimation it is impossible to accept the classification of social fascists as correct.

¹See *Daily Worker*, December 16, 1933.

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There is no difference in the two views (accepting for the time being the R.P.C.'s statement on the C.I. position) as to the ultimate *trend* of the T.U. leadership.

This is made clear by the R.P.C. not only saying that they are incapable of developing the class struggle to its necessary conclusion, not only adding that they take the workers along a path that implies the defence of capitalist institutions, but also finishing up with a quotation from Citrine and references to Henderson, all indicating that in the last resort the reformists "hand over" the workers to the ruling class. It would seem unnecessary, therefore, to cite Kerensky, Noske, Leipart, not to mention the T.U.C. in 1926 (admittedly a different stage).

If the R.P.C. recognises the objective outcome of Reformism, in what lies the difference in the two views? Is it merely the question of the degree of consciousness of the reformist leaders? Surely the revolutionary movement is not going to spend time arguing as to the exact degree of consciousness in the betrayal.

It seems important that the theory of Social Fascism should be understood as it is a valuable weapon in the hands of the revolutionary movement. It seems to me that Social Fascism can be defined as Social Democracy in an era of capitalist decline, when the policy of the reformist leaders, in holding the workers back from struggle and in disrupting the militant unity that is so necessary, is leading the mass of the working class to the shambles of Fascism. Social Democracy is objectively a wing of Fascism. It must be understood that almost daily experience is proving beyond doubt, to the mass of the workers, the accuracy and truth of the term Social Fascist. And this recognition means the orientation of the workers to those who so correctly analysed the policy of the Social Democratic leaders, *and* persistently fought them and offered militant leadership on day-to-day issues.

The second question raised in the Bulletin is the one concerning the relations of the Comintern to the reformist mass organisations, in particular, the Trade Unions.

The R.P.C. states its line on page 5, par. 3, as follows :

Appreciating that the mass working-class organisations are the Trade Unions and the Co-operative Societies, it is necessary that every endeavour should be made to gain the confidence of the workers in those organisations with a view to transforming the lower sections into instruments capable of revolutionary action.

The Bulletin then continues to state what it assumes is the Comintern line by quoting the notorious Lozovsky statement appearing in the R.I.L.U. Magazine for February, 1932, when he stated : " That we want to break up the reformist Trade Unions, that we want to weaken them, that we want to explode the trade union apparatus and destroy it—of that there cannot be the slightest doubt. . . . "

The R.P.C. states that it cannot accept this as the correct revolutionary approach. They are evidently unaware that Lozovsky repudiated the statement attributed to him as a misrepresentation of what he said. (*Daily Worker*, June 10, 1932.) Whilst the failure to notice Lozovsky's repudiation may be forgiven, it is inexcusable not to recognise the clear statement of policy contained in the twenty-one conditions and the Twelfth Plenum Resolutions, where the C.I. insists on work within the Unions, not to smash them, but to win over, as far as possible, the "lower sections," as the R.P.C. puts it. And so there is no real difference on this point.

Here again it is necessary to see the *trend*. The winning of the lower sections, necessarily involves conflict with the central apparatus. Whilst the C.I. does not want to split the Unions, the possibility must be seen at once of the reformist leaders expelling militant sections, &c. And at this point the expelled workers can obviously not be left unorganised.

The third "objection" contained in the Bulletin deals with the relations between the R.I.L.U. and the C.I.

The R.P.C. states that in its opinion the C.I. should not be in direct affiliation with Trade Unions, but should be an International of the Revolutionary Parties. As far as I can see, there is no suggestion that Trade Unions should affiliate to the C.I. It is the R.I.L.U. that adheres to the C.I.—it must, or there is no basis for its existence, but it does not *affiliate* to the C.I. which is an International of *Revolutionary Parties*.

At the end of the middle paragraph on page 5 of the Bulletin, however, the R.P.C. refers to "if the aim of securing disaffiliation from Amsterdam and affiliation with the R.I.L.U. leads to splitting off the revolutionary workers from those still under reformist leadership," then this means loss of contact and is wrong. Here again there is no real difference, the *trend* is towards the development of revolutionary consciousness in the rank-and-file and lower sections of the trade unions. At any given time there may be existing definite "breaks" such as the U.M.S., or Unions in which reformist influence has to some extent been undermined, such as N.A.F.T.A., or Unions in which the reformists are still in control. Within the latter, however, there is an "opposition" movement; and besides this there is not loss of contact when the new union has been set up: for example, the united front of the U.M.S. and the reformist members at many pits in Fife.

The function of the R.I.L.U. is to organise and help on that development, uniting, through affiliation, the trade unions which have been won over, also the T.U. "oppositions." Disaffiliation from Amsterdam and affiliation to the R.I.L.U. means the successful carrying through of the process. It is obvious that Amsterdam itself is not a means of contact with the rank-and-file.

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The fourth "objection" is the one concerning the extent to which the sections are able to draw up their programmes independently of the direction of the International. The Bulletin states :

We are in complete agreement with condition 15 of the 21 conditions, which makes it clear that such a programme must apply "to the special conditions of their country and be in accordance with the resolutions of the C.I. . . ."

This agreement with Condition 15 would imply that the point is raised because of the "unsatisfactory functioning" of the Congresses of the C.I. to which sections have the right of appeal in the event of the rejection of their proposed policy by the E.C.C.I. The reference is to the fact that the last World Congress was held in 1928, and the constitution provides that "World Congresses shall be convened every two years."

It would appear obvious that the reasons for this are purely practical—the absence of leading members from their countries for long periods in the face of a growingly acute world situation, and in an increasing number of cases, the extra risk entailed, &c. The real points at issue are these : (1) Has the failure to hold a World Congress been harmful to the revolutionary movement ; and (2) Is there any reason to suppose that a section's request for a full Congress on any serious matter has been, or would be, refused ?

In spite of these "objections" the R.P.C. finally welcomes "sympathetic" affiliation if it is satisfied on the objections it raises in the Bulletin. It seems that these objections are not real differences, but show lack of clarity within the R.P.C. The important point is, that the R.P.C. line is based on this policy, and they are seeking affiliation to the C.I., *if they are satisfied on the points raised.*

The N.A.C. will be asked, according to the R.P.C.'s proposed line, to continue negotiations with the C.I. and attempt to arrive at a satisfactory agreement on these points. It is true that the R.P.C. line would empower the N.A.C. to conclude the negotiations by affiliation without a further conference and prevents them from closing the negotiations in any other way without the instructions of a further conference, but it leaves the question of negotiation in the hands of an openly hostile N.A.C. who could, with ease, delay the matter for a further twelve months.

During this period, when the world situation will grow more and more acute, raising the question of the mobilisation of the workers for struggle and demanding greater clarity and closer revolutionary unity in preparation for decisive class struggles, the I.L.P. will be suspended in mid-air, a prominent debating platform, instead of a real revolutionary force, playing a powerful part in the historic struggles of the working class. During this period the barrage of anti-Comintern propaganda could continue through the official sources ; in these conditions the vital forces

of the I.L.P. would be dissipated, and a crime would be perpetrated on the working class. We should recognise these facts, and have the clear-cut proposal for affiliation to the C.I. as the basis of our policy.

The R.P.C. stresses the gravity of the whole situation, and it is because the situation is grave that we cannot be content with any qualified recommendations for sympathetic affiliation. Those who really want closer association with the C.I. must do their utmost to dispel the doubts and "objections," not give publicity to more doubts. This viewpoint will be accepted by the great majority of the R.P.C.'ers I have no doubt; this is made clear by the fact that one of the most vital sections of the R.P.C., the section which above all others was responsible for bringing the National R.P.C. back to life, is staunchly supporting the line of the Affiliation Committee. What should be the line of other R.P.C.'ers and R.P.C. groups throughout the country?

- (1) Raise the demand that the National R.P.C. shall accept the line of the Affiliation Committee, and agree to their proposal to work in unison for the widest possible campaign for the securing of affiliation to the C.I.
- (2) Approach the Affiliation Committee group in your area, and formulate plans for mobilising support by conferences, speakers at branches, papers on the question of affiliation, &c.

There is no doubt that a united campaign of the R.P.C. and the Affiliation Committee expressing itself in a widespread and intensive campaign would result in a victory at the Easter Conference. No realistic observer can deny that the I.L.P. membership is clamouring for a clear lead.

Let us give the lead, a lead that will direct the I.L.P. to revolutionary clarity, to the establishment of the revolutionary unity. If we fail it will mean the disintegration of the forces of the I.L.P. and its abject futility; if we succeed, as we can and must, it means that the I.L.P. will be playing a significant part in the struggle for power.

II.—The International Question

By OBSERVER

AT Derby in 1933 events in the I.L.P. culminated in a sharp break with its past policy. Two perspectives were now opened in the all-decisive International field. One, which was the line pursued by the National Administrative Council (N.A.C.) was that although the Second International had completely failed, the Third was equally unsuccessful. Nevertheless, outside the Second and Third