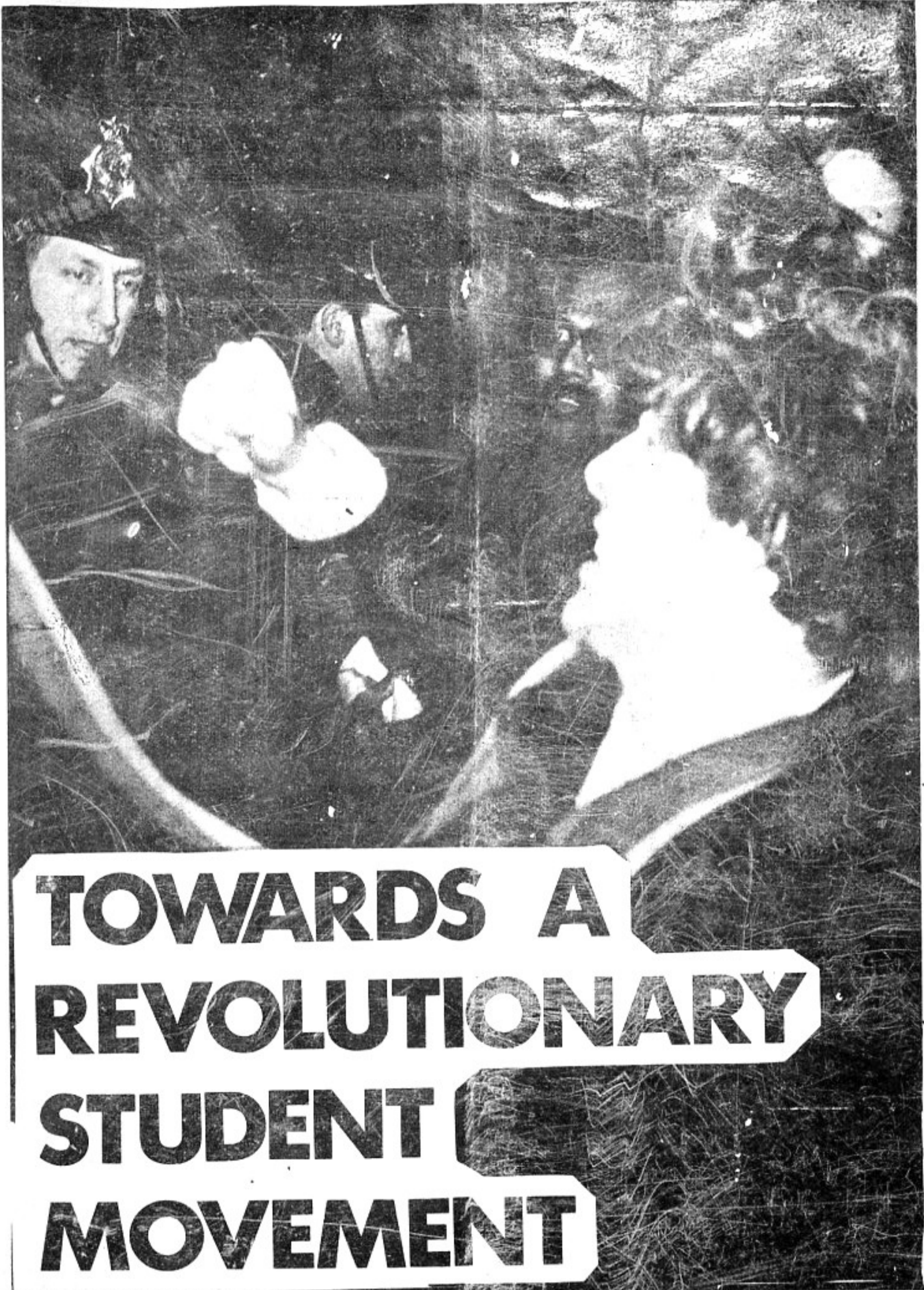


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**TOWARDS A
REVOLUTIONARY
STUDENT
MOVEMENT**

London RSSF
5 Doral Court
Chichele Road
London, N. W. 2.

1970

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P R E F A C E

The three signed articles in this pamphlet are based on speeches given at the Summer 1969 Conference of the London Revolutionary Socialist Students Federation.

"Political background to the student movement" presents the general political outlook of London RSSF. The essence of this outlook is conveyed by the slogan: "Students, integrate with the Working Class!" In Britain there can be no revolutionary overthrow of capitalism that is not based on and led by the working class. If the student movement is to be genuinely revolutionary, therefore, it must achieve political integration with the working class. This means adopting working class politics (Marxism) in struggles inside the colleges; where possible bringing the students into contact with the workers in struggle; and making salient to students that how they choose to spend their lives after graduation will have a big influence on their political effectiveness. With these points in mind London RSSF invited two militant workers, John Hannington and Mike Cooley, to the Conference to present the workers' view of the student movement. The last article, by Fawzi Ibrahim, takes up several of the practical problems encountered by revolutionary students in trying to build a political base inside their colleges.

Student

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Movement;

political background

No student claiming to be revolutionary can be really effective politically without a correct understanding of the political situation, nationally and internationally. Without political understanding one can be very active and militant in attacking the visible symptoms of what is wrong with the society we live in, without ever really understanding the nature of the disease, without helping anybody else to understand it, without choosing the key things to attack. Unless it is grasped that all the issues, from Vietnam to Palestine, from student facilities to housing, are part of the general struggle against imperialism and capitalism, it is impossible to really understand a particular situation, as none of the parts make sense in isolation from the whole.

Internationally we can see that the imperialist world in which we are operating is cracking apart at the seams. Militarily, despite unprecedented expenditure and unprecedented brutality the American imperialists are being defeated in Vietnam and throughout Asia, Africa and Latin America by the national liberation struggles. Economically this results in more and more being spent on wars of imperialist suppression, while the colonial super-profits are being cut as on the one hand, people break free from imperialist control, and on the other hand, neo-colonial puppets are forced to claim more and more autonomy, more and more of the profits, in order to maintain their shrinking credibility in the face of the masses. This situation forces the crisis inherent in capitalism to come to a head. In the midst of unprecedented inflation, interest rate rises and monetary crises, the financiers are haunted by the spectre of another 1929-style depression.

The increasing collaboration of Russian imperialism with American imperialism in trying to force a "settlement" in Vietnam and the Middle East, to try and prop up the status quo cannot save imperialism from its inevitable defeat. The invasion of Czechoslovakia, the attacks on the Chinese border, the increasing contradictions in E. Europe and the growing economic problems show that Russian imperialism is following the same doomed path as U.S. imperialism.

As for Britain, here the contradictions in imperialism are being reflected with a vengeance. The loss of exclusive control over Britain's Empire and increasing competition from other imperialists has created intractable problems, of which devaluation, the balance of payments, and the Common Market

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negotiations are expressions. In an attempt to save the situation, the monopolists are attempting to step up their exploitation of the British working class by denying basic trade union rights won in a century of struggle. The incorporation of the unions into the government structure is part of the "socialist" government's plan for the construction of the corporate state. But the struggles in Ulster, the increase in the level of the workers pay demands, the new militancy of previously backward sectors like women workers, dustmen, white-collar workers show that the class conflicts are intensifying.

The student movement in Britain cannot be seen apart from this overall development. In Britain today a tiny minority of students, mostly at Oxford and Cambridge, are the children of the monopoly capitalists or of the remnants of the feudal aristocracy. They are at university, not because it will be of any use in their practically useless lives, but because it is "the done thing" for their class. However, the majority of students are not being trained to be future members of the ruling class. They are to be its servants, its flunkies. Many, especially those in technical colleges, polytechnics, teacher training colleges and the like, are to become essentially skilled workers. A relatively small number are to be top flunkies of the bourgeoisie, such as its political front-men, whether Tory or Labour, diplomats, corporation managers, financial experts, Harley Street doctors, academics who defend bourgeois ideology, newspaper editors, judges, etc., etc. These people have the same objective interests as the monopolists, and when universities were dealing mainly with potential members of the ruling class, potential top flunkies, or those who had a reasonable hope of becoming top flunkies, the students as a whole were a reactionary body, as can be seen from their strike-breaking role in the 1926 General Strike. But as technological advances are made, so capitalism needs more technicians; as social conflicts increase, so capitalism needs more sociologists, to try to find safe ways of patching up the system; as the problems of selling their goods increase, thus requiring more emphasis on advertising, so the capitalists need more people trained in the graphic arts. Hence the rapid expansion in university education, and the willingness of big business to put up a lot of the money required. In order to secure an adequate supply of trained people, more people are trained than will ultimately be required, thus giving capitalism a margin of safety to allow for drop-outs, market fluctuations, etc., and to ensure that the bosses can pick the most useful people from as wide a range as is feasible.

The student is faced with uncertainty about his future in several ways. Firstly, there is a strong possibility that he will fail to get a degree. Although the overall failure rate is not as high as that in France, it ranges from 3% at Cambridge, where the children of the big bourgeoisie cannot be allowed to fail, to over 50% at some technical colleges. Secondly, if he does get a degree, this is no guarantee of finding a job, although the mass unemployment of graduates common in many neo-colonial countries and which arose fairly recently in Italy, is not a feature in Britain at the moment. Thirdly, on getting a job, he becomes subject to all the pressures that are now forcing "white-collar" workers and their unions into increased militancy, with the danger of unemployment, with wages held back while the cost of living rockets. Fourthly, the student, who is able, at college,

to look ahead more easily than a person involved in the day-to-day process of working for a living, and who is to some extent trained as an intellectual to do so, can see that his uncertain future, rendered yet more uncertain by the prospect of future changes making his particular speciality irrelevant, will be part of a corrupt imperialist system doomed to collapse. All this has created the beginning of revolutionary consciousness among Britain's students as shown at Hornsey, Guildford, Sussex, the LSE and many other places.

Just as capitalism at certain times needed large numbers of coal miners or cotton workers, and later, when more profit could be made from oil, synthetic fibres, etc., it started throwing the workers from the superseded industries on the scrapheap, so the needs of capitalism for sociologists or Keynesian economists are extremely unlikely to remain the same over any long period, and the situation cannot be much more stable for chemists or engineers in the long run. Thus the fundamental interests of the vast majority of students are the interests of the working class. The ruling class tries to attack this objective unity by fostering subjective disunity. They try to persuade students that they are superior to the workers, and the existence of this attitude among students is used in attempts to turn the workers against students and against any progressive ideas they may have.

The first ruling class tactic, and of the oldest, is to try to make every student aim at being a top flunkey, to commit himself to the rat-race for good academic results, to try to sell himself as effectively as possible to the monopolists. The effect is similar to the effect of football pools, etc., on working class consciousness. A tiny handful "make it", a far greater number are kept passive by the prospect. Another tactic is to play upon the idealism of many students, and to tell them that they can help the community by applying their knowledge. In reality they are helping capitalism by patching up some of the symptoms of a disease in society that needs drastic surgery, not Elastoplast. Thus a doctor may make the lives of thalidomide victims slightly easier, but he is also making it easier for the drug companies to perpetrate similar atrocities in future. Reformism is the next tactic of the ruling class, and its supporters in the student movement. It is used whenever a significant proportion of people cannot be fooled into thinking that everything in the garden is lovely. They are told that all that has to be done is to remove a few obnoxious weeds. The ruling class can nearly always afford to make a few concessions to the reformists, if it helps to keep both sides in business. They have no more than a sentimental interest in keeping the remnants of feudal restrictions or in particular forms of administration, because they are not basically interested in how a particular university is run, provided that it continues to be run in their interests. In fact the reformists may well point out ways in which the universities can be run more efficiently as tools of capitalism, and given the opportunity the reformists will eagerly take much of the burden of administration upon themselves. This incorporation of students into the administrative structure is all part of the move towards the corporate state, in which, through a network of organisations, supposedly representing their members, the government as the representative of big business as a whole

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extends its control into every sector of social activity, as in Nazi Germany. Every organisation through which discontent could be expressed becomes an instrument of control. The monopolists' power becomes greater through being much more far-reaching. This plan of the ruling class was laid out in the Parliamentary Select Committee Report on Student Relations. A Higher Education Commission is to exercise control by the state over the whole of higher education, using the National Union of Students, at present largely discredited and ignored except as a travel agency but trying hard for a comeback under a 'left' 'militant' cover, as a major instrument to fight the students and to control the functioning of Student Unions. Any unrest is to be dealt with by absorbing the protesters into a vast jungle of consultative committees under the slogan of "Participation". People "integrated" into this structure of state control will have no real power to make any changes because control of finances will be kept by the government. In fact these people will "participate" in the process of government only to the extent that they will be forced to act as spokesmen for the system to the rest of the students and will have to explain that "nothing can be done about the situation". Anybody wanting to oppose this set-up will be attacked as "a tiny minority of trouble-makers not willing to go through the proper channels".

It is also necessary to combat the idea of no organisation, that everybody will just "do their own thing" without any "bureaucratic" leadership, and that faced with this the whole international imperialist system will collapse like the walls of Jericho. Those who advocate "dropping out" are at least slightly more honest in that they admit that they are concerned only with themselves and are quite happy to let the present system continue. They at least recognise that individuals and their actions cannot transform society, while others will take isolated individualistic actions, cutting themselves off from the mass of students and the mass of the population, and instead of admitting that their actions are basically to bolster up their own egos, will claim to be "revolutionaries". The anarchist concept of organisation, apart from providing opportunities for petty despotism, unchallengeable because no official leadership exists, is of no use whatsoever, unless it is faced with an anarchist police, army, government, etc., as one of the key strengths of modern governments is organisation, the ability to rush police or troops to where they are needed, the ability to distort the facts by control of communications, etc., etc. This can only be fought by a stronger organised force, that of the organised working class. Inside colleges what is required are strong bases of revolutionary students, not individual "heroes".

What are the political tasks in the student movement in future?

Firstly, to continue to oppose capitalism and imperialism in all its forms, to fight racism and fascism, to support working class struggles and the national liberation movements. Secondly, to make this political line effective by concentrating on a policy of integration of students with the working class, the only consistently revolutionary class, the only class with the power to smash capitalism and imperialism. Thirdly, to implement this policy in practice by

(a) inside the colleges putting forward a working class line in particular struggles, fighting the reactionary college authorities and their policies not on grounds of abstract "democracy" and "justice" or of fighting for (petty-bourgeois) "student power", but pointing out how the authorities function as agents of monopoly capitalism and imperialism and that this can only be fundamentally changed when the working class holds state power.

(b) Outside the colleges, organising active student support for working class struggles, and for anti-imperialist struggles.

(c) When students leave college, encouraging them to become workers and not their exploiters, such as personnel managers, etc.

The basic strategy is that students should put themselves wholeheartedly at the service of the working class. The students can make no basic advances if they isolate themselves in so-called "red bases", for if they do not simply make "student power" demands, demands for greater privileges for an elite in a corrupt society, then they will come up against the monopoly capitalist class and the state machine which it controls, as we have seen with the use of the police and the courts at the LSE. It is necessary for students to work for unity with students at other colleges, vital potential allies, and to overcome features like the "LSE chauvinism" which did so much harm to that struggle. It is necessary to work for integration with the working class and to reject the attitude that "students are workers too" and that they are indeed the vital section of the working class, a technological elite superior to the organised working class. Students can be seen as a vanguard only in so far as they may develop consciousness ahead of the rest of the population through being young, and thus capable of easily discarding old ideas, and through being intellectuals, and thus capable of knowing what is going on throughout the world.

A vitally important question is that of organisational structure, finding the relationship between the centre and the bases, that will best serve the political work. Fundamentally, the task of the central organisation is not to substitute itself for the bases, but to aid the base work, to provide a framework in which base work can most effectively be done. If effective aid is to be given to the bases, there must be a real organisation at the centre, not an incompetent anarchistic mess. The centre should point out the direction to be followed, but this can be done only by drawing on the experience gained at the grass-roots level. Any proposal, no matter how theoretically correct, no matter how concrete and detailed the guidance given, will be little more than an empty call, unless there are people at the grass-roots level who agree with it, and are willing to work hard to implement it.

What assistance can be given to the bases? Various technical facilities can be made available. Central meetings can be held on topics of general interest to students. These can play a part in increasing the political level of students, dealing with topics that do not crop up directly at the various colleges, and can be used to involve new contacts at a higher level of activity. Study groups can be organised around various subjects, and these can participate in common activity to link theory with practice, an essential part of all political work.

INTEGRATE with WORKING-CLASS!

Extracts from speeches by John Hannington and Mike Cooley

I

JOHN HANNINGTON instruments maker, shop stewards convenor, AEF, founding member of Communist Party of Britain (Marxist-Leninist).

To begin at the beginning, there is no such thing as a student/worker alliance. It is but a hollow slogan similar in origin and objective to that of the other great non-starter "unity of the left". Both sound very nice, very positive and constructive, both can and do muster enthusiastic meetings, but when these half-baked theories are put into practice they lead the working class not forward but backwards and leave it confused and defenceless in the face of the class enemy.

We need as students and as workers to understand the meaning of these false slogans/policies, their origins and those responsible for them - those people and their political parties who have made a life-long study and practice of misinforming and misleading the British working class, i. e. Social Democracy in the form of the Labour Party and its faithful ally Revisionism in the form of the Communist Party of Great Britain.

The working class now are standing on the threshold of the greatest potential for real advance. They have the organisational experience, and they have proven in countless thousands of battles with the employing class that they are not lacking in courage. What is lacking and what has never existed is a revolutionary Marxist-Leninist leadership. History has proven that no working class has ever won its freedom without such a leadership.

On the other side, I'm sure we would all agree that the British Ruling Class are the oldest, cleverest, most cunning, ruthless and barbaric ruling class in the world. They will spare no effort in this period of growing class contradictions to make sure that workers don't travel along that road which is the road of revolution, the road that is going to end exploitation once and for all in this country.

Just because the possibilities exist for real advance it would be absolute folly for any worker or student to believe that there is not going to be the most concentrated of all attacks on the working class that this country has ever witnessed. These attacks are being carried out by the crisis party of Capitalism, the social democratic Labour Party.

Time is running short if we are to fulfil this task. If we don't determine at meetings such as this one today where we are going, then the Ruling Class will decide for us.

How then can meetings such as this assist the working class in the coming struggles? First let us replace the false slogan of student/worker alliance with that of worker/student integration. How then can we bring this integration about? Should students talk to workers at factory gates, in the pubs and clubs, in their homes; should workers do as I am doing today? I would say yes to all these, but something more fundamental is called for: integration is not just an organisational question but a political one also. Such integration must have a common aim for workers and students, both sections must be subject to a common discipline. This can only be achieved by both workers and students integrating within a Marxist-Leninist party. Such a party does exist. Small as it may be, it is the party of which I am proud to be a member alongside many other active workers. Our party, the Communist Party of Britain (Marxist-Leninist) has set itself the task of building a revolutionary party embracing workers and students.

One thing you can be sure of - the British working class are not going to be led by students. I've had occasion to hear students expounding a theory that they, the students, were going to be the great mentors, the great leaders of the working class, that they, the students, were going to thrash out the policy in the universities in their little cells and when the "revolutionary" theory is ready for the workers then they, the students, will trot along to the factory gates and say to the workers, "There you are, lads, we've worked it all out for you, get busy and make revolution". The worker's reply to such an approach would be similar to the one he would give to the employer: "Get Stuffed". Lenin said it in another way more eloquently in "What is to be done":-

"The "economic struggle between the workers and the employers and the government," about which you make as much fuss as if you had made a new discovery, is being carried on in all parts of Russia, even the most remote, by the workers themselves who have heard about strikes, but who have heard almost nothing about Socialism. The "activity" you want to stimulate among us workers by advancing concrete demands promising palpable results, we are already displaying and in our every-day, petty trade-union work, we put forward concrete demands, very often without any assistance from the intellectuals whatever. But such activity is not enough for us; we are not children to be fed on the sops of "economic" politics alone; we want to know everything that everybody else knows, we want to learn the details of all aspects of political life and to take part actively in every political event. In order that we may do this, the intellectuals must talk to us less on what we already know, and tell us more about what we do not know and what we can never learn from our factory and "economic" experience, that is, you must give us political knowledge. You intellectuals can acquire this knowledge, and it is your duty to bring us that knowledge in a hundred and a thousand times greater measure than you have done up till now; and you must bring us this knowledge, not only in the form of arguments, pamphlets and articles which sometimes - excuse my frankness! - are very dull, but in the form of live

exposures of what our government and our governing classes are doing at this very moment in all spheres of life. Fulfil this duty with greater zeal, and talk less about "increasing the activity of the masses of the workers!" We are far more active than you think, and we are quite able to support by open street fighting demands that do not even promise any "palpable results" whatever! You cannot "increase" our activity, because you yourselves are not sufficiently active. Be less subservient to spontaneity, and think more about increasing your own activity, gentlemen!"

I hope the meeting does not think, based on what I have said, that I am against intellectuals, but rather that I'm very much in favour of worker intellectuals.

I say this because I and many others are convinced that one of the greatest single mistakes that has consistently been made by generations of workers is that they tend to leave the political thinking and theorising to those "who are better equipped". It is this error that has led the British working class into the political jungle of social'democracy, it is also this error that has blunted the workers struggle and given rise to revisionism in Britain.

The very word "alliance" strikes me as something which is of only a temporary nature.

Can the student struggles, whether for a democratic control of universities or colleges, for improved grants, against social injustice, capitalism and imperialism, be apart or separate from the struggles of the working class?

At this moment in history we are witnessing most concentrated attacks against workers wherever they labour by the reactionary triple alliance of the Labour government, the employers and the General Council of the T. U. C. Workers' resistance to these attacks is growing, but it has a spontaneous nature, there is no political cohesion, no fundamental objective; it is in short a brave and necessary struggle, but it remains nevertheless a defensive struggle.

What workers and students alike need to understand is that no real lasting freedom or democratic rights can be achieved, unless political power is seized by the working class, and that power held by means of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

In closing I would like to stress the urgent task that confronts us all, workers and students alike - the development of the Communist Party of Britain (Marxist-Leninist).

We are all agreed, I'm sure, that the existence of our party will prove to be the all-decisive factor in the coming struggles.

Our party and its monthly paper THE WORKER is firmly based on experienced working class comrades, who have learned the hard way on the blind alley politics of revisionism.

We are indeed fortunate to have such able comrades as our party's Chairman, Comrade Reg Birch, and others whose long records in combatting social democracy, economism and revisionism have given our party a firm ideological base on which to build.

Of course our party has its critics, but whilst they talk endlessly of the need for a Marxist-Leninist party in Britain - we have done it! Action speaks louder than words.

If we politically conscious people fail in our task the working class will never forgive us, for it is they who will pay the price for our failure.

You as students have much to contribute to a Marxist-Leninist party. You have qualities which are of vital importance in our historic task. You have youth and youth will always hold a very special place in our party, for it is the youth that is least corrupted by capitalist ideology. You have special abilities which will prove to be invaluable in the development of our party theory and practice. May I then in closing, on behalf of the Central Committee of our Party, wish you well in your coming struggles.

II

MIKE COOLEY draughtsman, member of National Executive Committee of DATA.

To start with, how does the working class view the student movement? It is recognised by politically aware workers that there is a world-wide student revolt against authority, and that in the West, students can see that the educational system is being used to turn out fodder for I. C. I. and the other monopolies. The students are demanding representation, fighting victimisation etc., and on a higher level are opposing the war in Vietnam and what goes on in South Africa and Rhodesia. The working class is not convinced that the kind of demonstrations that students get involved in are particularly effective politically. After all, when some of the workers had a demonstration recently at Leylands it cost the ruling class £8½million. Just getting a crowd together is nothing special, it happens at every Cup Final. What matters is how

people are going to be mobilised through it, how it is going to be followed up. Militancy means more than shouting a few slogans. It involves protection against victimisation - when a shop steward is attacked, the British working class will unite to defend him, and this is a lesson the students should begin to understand. In demonstrating on these issues the students begin to see the hand of police brutality, which workers on the picket line have known about for years. So the students come up against the state and discover that the fundamental conflict is not between the students and the university authorities but is a class conflict, of which the student movement is only a manifestation. Only the working class will be able to change the social system and they must lead the struggle, although, as in France, student protest may serve as a catalyst.

STUDENTS NOT A CLASS

We must recognise that students are not a class, that they are simply a transitional group drawn from a very wide spectrum of society with a low proportion from the working class. Mainly they reflect the interests of the petty bourgeoisie, and this can be seen in the outlook of the student movement, even the student movement at its best. Firstly there is the critique of course content in the universities, often in Boy Scout terms like "stimulating" and "creative" which have nothing to do with the real fundamental issues. Then there is talk about making the universities democratic, which is about as farcical as talk about making Parliament democratic. Both are bodies that serve capitalism and imperialism, and what little independence they have will be subordinated to the drive for more and more profit. Some of the demands now being advanced by students are leading to a form of student syndicalism, reflecting petty bourgeois interests in calls for a "free university", which is absurd because any ruling class will use the educational system for its own ends. When the working class comes to power it will control the universities, not leave them "free" for the professions and the students to run. This is what the dictatorship of the proletariat means and unless this is accepted, protest is simply the old petty bourgeois protest against the bourgeoisie for being a bit too greedy and a bit too brutal.

A dangerous elitism seems to be developing amongst students with the ideas of Marcuse, who has a history of connections with the C.I.A. This concept implies that since students have got more time and more intellectual capacity they arrive at the correct solutions, while the workers are incapable of understanding the situation and facing up to it. This must be completely rejected. Some say that the students are workers and are exploited like workers. That is a farce. The majority of these people will become part of the exploiting system - especially the most militant Social Science students, who become the real con-men in the personnel departments with the job of explaining to workers why they have got a nervous breakdown, when in fact it is because of overwork. Engineering and science students, who tend to be less forthcoming at university, are often better because they are closer to the point of production. Also these people are now beginning to be subjected to the same sort of work-study techniques as the working class, since automation and computerisation extends the range of proletarianisation.

If we look at the position of the British working class, we see that it has all the worst features of a metropolitan working class, and although it is exploited it has a far higher standard of living than that of the colonial workers due to the super-profits extracted from the colonies. The British working class has been deeply imbued with imperialist and racist ideas, respect for armies and imperialist brute force, etc., and the educational system is a vital part of this. Thus in respect to the national liberation movement, large sections of the working class have accepted the idea that colonial people fighting for their freedom are in fact terrorists. It has been possible in the past to export the most intense exploitation and brutality and because of this the trade union movement has developed along semi-non political lines, with economist demands. I accept that there is a contradiction between the interests of colonial workers and metropolitan workers, but this is a non-antagonistic one whereas the contradiction between British imperialism and the British working class is completely antagonistic. British imperialism will have to be destroyed by the British working class, and there are elements within the class that are now trying to regroup themselves in order that there may be a base to do it. Thanks to the victories of the national liberation movements, Britain can no longer export its most intense exploitation and this is now coming back on to the shoulders of the British working class with the freeze and the anti-trade union legislation. In fact there is a drive towards the corporate state. Traditional rights, enjoyed by the trade unionists for generations, won as the result of struggle and sacrifice, are now being taken from them in a manner not even seen in the last war. The crisis is far more fundamental now, and so we see the labour lieutenants of the capitalist class being forced into becoming the industrial Policemen of Wilson, Arnold Weinstock and the rest. Wilson has been prepared to cut back on the living standards of the British working class, so that sterling might be strong enough to back up the dollar. Yet the working class have the capability and understanding to fight back, and there are demands which may begin to represent the "peace, bread and land" of the 1970's in Britain, that is wage increases without productivity deals, the right to work, which is an open challenge to the mergers and "rationalisation" and no anti-trade union legislation. Thus the opportunity for potential revolutionary work among the British working class is enormous.

But it must be recognised that the workers quite rightly have a healthy distrust for intellectuals. At every stage when the worker is confronted with the state machine, he is confronted with the intellectual, the lawyer, or the magistrate. It is important that students and workers should get together and begin to explain and discuss their positions in a fundamental way. It won't do to have the sort of situation they had in France where some of the student groups had their own tame workers that they used to bring round to the factory gates, saying "this is our worker and he will talk to you", because they were indeed talking different languages.

But the students may well say that the British working class is not particularly revolutionary at the moment, and of course this is so. They may

also say that the workers would not be prepared to face a violent revolution, that this is contrary to British tradition. In fact, Britain has a long history of violence. There is colonial violence and it is the same army used brutally in the colonies that will be used against the British workers the moment they stand up to end their oppression. There were more people executed in this country than in France at the time of the French Revolution. There is the violence of evicting a worker who can't pay his rent. There is the situation where in Willesden recently a doctor said that if a National Health patient was over 65 there was no need to resuscitate him. And that is violence against the working class as well. Violence is a class concept and we should never be afraid to say that.

The working class will be prepared to respond to a call for a revolutionary change but only from a Marxist-Leninist Party that has its roots deep in the working class, organised and led by those at the point of production. The leadership of the working class cannot come from students shouting slogans or handing out leaflets. The only way in which there can be a student-worker alliance is when the students are prepared to integrate with the working class, to stand on the side of the working class under its leadership. The move towards the corporate state is developing and what is needed is revolutionary working class leadership. The workers will say that they are the people who produce the wealth, who pay for the universities and the students, etc., and that they can get along perfectly well without the bosses.

We are living in an age with enormous revolutionary potential, and we don't want to be too humble in saying that or too reserved in making real revolutionary demands. In the words of the great working class leader James Connolly,

The "Labour Fakir", full of guile,
Base doctrine ever preaches,
And while he bleeds the rank and file
Tame moderation teaches.
Yet in his despite, we'll see the day
When with sword in its girth
Labour shall march in war array
To seize its own, THE EARTH.

I believe that this day is coming and when it does come this will be the opportunity for students and workers to unite because there can be an alliance on the real fundamental issue which is the destruction of the bourgeois state.

Guidelines to Base Building

FAWZI IBRAHIM Secretary of London RSSF,
recent student at Regent St. Polytechnic,
member of CPB(M-L).

Political work by revolutionary students will in the main be done among students at the present stage. Although many students may be involved with organisations outside the student movement, their most effective political work will in the majority of cases be carried out among students in their colleges, as this is the sector of society they spend most of their time with.

Revolutionary students have two tasks to perform in their political work among students: firstly, spreading socialist ideas and combatting bourgeois reactionary ideas; secondly, to introduce revolutionary politics into every progressive movement, including those on issues directly affecting only students, and make such movements more conscious and determined. These tasks can only be carried out effectively by base building. That is, a process of political work through which revolutionary socialist ideas begin to have currency and to command sympathy and support among the students. Base building goes on all the time and develops through political struggle. Bases will thus exist at different stages, from the stage of spreading revolutionary literature, selling London RSSF publications and serving as a link between the college and the revolutionary student movement, to the level of actually leading the students in their struggles. For students as a whole, the task of spreading revolutionary ideas and leading their struggles is done by an organisation such as London RSSF for students in London. In particular colleges this will be done by students engaged in base building. This report deals with work at the base and attempts to give a few guidelines to effective base building.

Our tasks as revolutionary students in a particular institution will be performed through various organisational forms. Basically these can be divided into two levels: the BROAD FRONT of progressives, and the MASS ORGANISATION of all students. In many cases the role of the broad front and the mass organisation is misunderstood and their relationship confused. It is very

important if base building is to develop and yield results that the role of and relation between these two levels be understood clearly.

The Broad Front

In most colleges this will be an organisation such as a Socialist Society. It is the organisation through which revolutionary students will attempt to mobilise the students and give them leadership. The exact form it will take and which students it tries to mobilise will depend on the particular conditions at each institution. But certain general lines to be followed can be mentioned.

(a) The broad front should not be a debating society as is the case with the majority of Soc Socs at the present time. In most colleges where a broad front such as a Soc Soc exists, it acts more or less as a forum for discussion and debate with its activity confined to organising meetings with invited speakers followed by discussion. The speakers and the topics, having been fixed six months in advance, will obviously bear no relation to the particular problems concerning the students at the time. Discussion therefore becomes academic with various views put forward, each as good as the other since none are tested in practice. This is not to deny that discussions are useful, but they must serve a purpose and not be ends in themselves. The purpose is to advance the understanding of the members and to help them draw lessons from their experiences. The broad front must therefore engage in struggle, putting theory to the test of practice and learning from practice the correct theory. For example, if engaged in a struggle over representation on the governing body, then there can be discussions and teach-ins on topics like "Who controls the educational system", "Education to serve the working class not the imperialists", etc., all of which should be related to the fight for representation. In this way, a particular campaign is related to wider issues and these by being related to particular demands become more relevant.

The broad front should have both THEORY and PRACTICE, discussion and action; both holding meetings on the U.S. aggression in Vietnam and breaking up a Saigon puppet meeting. It is important not to put too much emphasis on one to the neglect of the other (as is the case with all petty bourgeois tendencies). Some loathe theory and are obsessed with unoriented action. Anarchist actions, unguided by theory, not seen as part of a strategic programme which must be worked out collectively and understood and accepted by all people taking part, can never be effective. Others emphasise theory at the expense of practice. Both these attitudes are harmful. Discussions on their own will only turn into abstract debate and can never change peoples ideas. Only when discussion is related to relevant examples and linked with experience in struggle can different lines be tested and correct theory be learned. This way people change their ideas and accept new ones. For example, it was through confrontations and what followed in suspensions and other victimisations and the open use of the state machine (police, courts, etc.,) in the LSE struggle that students began to understand the

nature of the state and the violence used by the ruling class.

(b) Secondly, the broad front should attempt to organise the more politically conscious students on a specific programme. This programme will vary depending on the extent of involvement in struggle and the political understanding achieved. The programme must be at such a level as to make the broad front LEAD - not so broad and general as to tail behind the militant students, and not so specific and at such a high level as to make the broad front sectarian, cliquish and divorced from the militant students.

(c) Thirdly, the broad front should attempt to unite all the forces that can be united on its programme. But hand in hand with UNITY must go STRUGGLE, ideological struggle inside the broad front between the various political lines, struggle over the way forward, the direction of the broad front and the day to day activities. This way the essence of the various political lines is revealed. Without such struggle, no demarcation lines are drawn between the various political lines and the result is general confusion among the rank and file. The aim of the ideological struggle is to achieve greater political clarity and hence a higher and more conscious unity. Some comrades insist that ideological struggle is just a form of sectarianism and a danger to unity. Thus they say that we should cover up our differences inside the broad front, basically forget about politics, and thus achieve "unity of the left" in the particular college. Such unity is false spineless unity without any foundation and will break down at the first encounter with the enemy. In the wake of failure, the broad front will tend to divide into a group of "debators" convinced that action can never succeed and a group of "activists" determined at all costs to "do something", no matter how badly planned or how poorly supported.

(d) Fourthly, the broad front should have a definite ORGANISATION with a leading committee elected by the membership and officers responsible to the membership. If there is no allocation of responsibilities the broad front will tend to fall into the bureaucratic hands of one or two people who have not been elected, do not necessarily represent anybody, and are not answerable to the membership.

EXISTING BROAD FRONTS

At most colleges Socialist Societies or other broad fronts already exist. The problem that faces revolutionary students at those colleges is how to transform the existing broad fronts into revolutionary ones, and if this is impossible, to set up new broad fronts. Here again the path to be followed depends on local conditions.

If the existing Soc Soc is attracting a number of genuine militants, then it is imperative for revolutionary students to work within it in order to win members to a revolutionary line. This is the first step that revolutionary students beginning political work at a college will have to take: INVESTIGATE THE NATURE OF THE EXISTING POLITICAL SOCIETIES. It is here that contact

with the more politically conscious students could be made most easily. To transform these societies into revolutionary broad fronts, a consistent political line should be put forward on all issues with the view of winning the majority of the members to that line. Only then can the society be transformed into a revolutionary broad front. Any kind of behind-the-scenes manoeuvring should be completely rejected.

If the Soc Soc is completely controlled by petty bourgeois elements with no hope of changing it, then gradually this will result in militant students becoming disillusioned and leaving while others outside will not bother to join. In this case, at some stage when support has been gained among the membership, the initiative should be taken in forming a genuine broad front. In some cases this will be on a specific issue such as Vietnam, Palestine, racism, etc., so that political support can be gained by having an example of a broad front working according to correct principles. In many cases, this initiative is not taken which leads to the revolutionary students lagging behind and merely reacting to the existing leadership.

Mass Work

This is political work carried out at the mass level among the students in general through Union meetings, General Assemblies, etc. It is a very important level of work because through it we can mobilise the students and lead them in struggle. We should aim at mobilising the maximum number of students to participate in our campaigns and activities. However, it must be recognised that we will never mobilise all the students, but a large proportion (how large depends on the nature of the institution) can be mobilised through the activities of the broad front. The number mobilised at a particular stage will depend on the level of political consciousness of the students, the campaign being conducted, etc. It is only by mobilising a small number at the start that the mass of students will begin to think of the issues and will rally behind the vanguard organisation. In general, provided the RIGHT ISSUES are chosen, a MASS LINE is adopted and CORRECT TACTICS are pursued with regard to Student Unions, effective political gains can be achieved.

Issues

Many militant students, especially those who are attempting to start political work at their colleges, complain of the non-existence of issues at their institutions. They look with envy at other colleges: "If only we had an Adams" or "a racist lodging system", etc. In desperation, sometimes issues are imported wholesale from other institutions without regard to their suitability to the conditions of the particular institution.

An issue is simply a practical manifestation of political ideology. For example, one manifestation of imperialist control of education is having directors of imperialist companies on college governing bodies, another is course content. They are issues which manifest bourgeois politics which we have to counter with proletarian politics. Other issues are manifestations of proletarian politics such as support for anti-imperialist struggles, anti-racism, the fight against anti-trade union legislation, etc.

Issues, being the practical manifestation of politics, are all around us. Living under a capitalist system, all our daily experiences are manifestations of bourgeois politics. If we look at everyday life from a proletarian standpoint we find that everything, even charity collections or rag week can be given a political interpretation and used as an issue. Not every issue, however, generates interest and support among the students. Therefore the problem is not finding an issue but in choosing one that will rally support behind it.

The basic criterion in choosing an issue is that it must be possible to use it to raise the political level of the students. Thus the issues chosen will depend on the existing political consciousness of the students.

TWO TYPES OF ISSUES

Issues can be divided basically into two types: INTERNAL and EXTERNAL. It is not intended to separate issues mechanically by this division as internal and external issues are connected and it is wrong to think of them in any other way. At the same time it is useful to deal with them separately here as each has its own specific characteristics and has to be handled in a particular way.

INTERNAL ISSUES

These are issues that stem from the institution itself and reflect the class forces at that institution. Examples: representation, racist lodgings bureau, Union autonomy, bad facilities, etc. They stem directly from the experiences of the students and as such are most felt by them and have potential for mobilising a large number of students. This type of issue is usually the first type of issue to crop up in colleges with no history of political struggle. In dealing with internal issues there are a few points that have to be kept in mind:

1) INTERNAL ISSUES MUST REFLECT GENUINE FEELINGS, GRIEVANCES OR DEMANDS OF THE STUDENTS. Sometimes we have to generate the demands and feed the grievances through our agitation and propaganda which is part of the process of making students' demands more conscious and determined (more on this later). We should guard against carrying out activities just because they are glamorous or seem to be a good idea. Putting a red flag on the college flagpole, for instance, might be very appropriate in a situation of intense class struggle, but in a situation where no struggle is going on, it would be just another rag stunt. The conditions must be right for any action undertaken, otherwise we will isolate ourselves from the masses of students. Revolutionary

political work is not something to satisfy our subjective desires so we can enjoy ourselves or relieve our consciences. It is a conscious attempt to raise political questions, provide answers, and in the process raise the political level of the majority of participants.

2) In dealing with internal issues we must GUARD AGAINST "STUDENT POWER" REFORMISM. It is very easy to fall into this and play into the hands of the authorities. Take an issue like student representation. It is very easy to fall into the trap of simply asking for more than the others are asking for. If the Union bureaucrats are asking for 2%, then we ask for 10%, if they are asking for 10%, we ask for 20% or 30% and so on. In other words we attempt to outbid the reformists at reformism. The fact is that all these reforms can be incorporated within the system. Reformist demands which only a year ago were regarded as heresy by the authorities are now being conceded without the students even asking for them. The demand for "parity of representation" (one-third staff, one-third students, and one-third representatives of "public interest") for governing bodies is today NUS policy. We will not defeat reformism this way; we will only become bigger reformists. We would in fact mislead the students, confuse them and demoralise them when they find that achieving these reforms does not change anything substantial. This is not to say that revolutionary students should boycott struggles for reforms. We should use these reformist demands, give political interpretations to them, explain why the demand is correct, why the authorities refuse to accept it and how any amount of reform will in fact not remove the system within which the college works. As Lenin points out "It is not for us socialists to guarantee the success of any bourgeois movement". It is OUR DUTY however not to neglect such movements and issues and we must use them to acquaint more and more students with revolutionary politics.

EXTERNAL ISSUES

These are issues that reflect class struggle outside the college, such as working class struggles (the fight against incomes policy, anti-trade union legislation) and solidarity with other students (LSE lockout), anti-imperialist issues (Vietnam, Palestine, South Africa and Rhodesia, etc.).

Usually it is more difficult to mobilise students on these external issues than on internal ones mainly because of the lack of direct experience. It requires a higher level of political consciousness and some prior experience in political struggle. This is not saying that no attempts at mobilising students on these issues should take place. On the contrary, bringing external issues into the colleges is of great importance. Apart from raising political issues of fundamental importance, it is one way of combatting the isolation of college struggles from the rest of society.

External issues in general will contain progressive politics and as we do our propaganda for them we face the opposition of reactionary individuals or societies, the Student Union and the college authorities. This way, external issues could merge with internal ones resulting in intense political struggle.

We have to treat both internal and external issues in a manner which the mass of students can understand. That is, not so advanced that they will be meaningless to all but a small clique. Also, not to treat them in such an opportunist way that it lags behind the students understanding. As an example, take the issue of freedom of speech and freedom to organise. For the liberals, it is an end in itself and is always to be fought for under any conditions. We, as revolutionaries, know that freedom is a class question; freedom for the bourgeoisie necessarily excludes freedom for the proletariat. Our object therefore is not to fight for freedom as such but to make as many students as possible understand the nature of freedom and fight for freedom for revolutionary political ideas. So in a college with no prior political struggle, no political societies, etc., we will fight for freedom to organise and for other similar reformist demands because the students are not at the level where they can understand the class concept of freedom; they have to go through further struggles to begin to grasp it. On the other hand, in a college where liberalism has proved its bankruptcy in the face of direct suppression of revolutionary students and ideas by the authorities, we must go beyond liberalism and call for freedom of proletarian ideas against the bourgeoisie.

Mass Links

To carry through our campaigns successfully we have to have direct and strong links with the students. We should guard against becoming a form of sect with our own jargon, our own interests, meeting places, etc., detached from the rest of the students. Revolutionary students should go where the students are, discuss their experiences with them and hear their grievances and criticisms, all of which should be treated seriously.

Some sincere revolutionary students are so busy in the movement at large that they have no time to spend in their own colleges. They thus completely neglect the place where they could be most useful and become isolated from it. Others take the work at their colleges seriously but are so busy writing and producing stacks of leaflets on all imaginable issues that they never have time to see what the students think of this flood of paper, if they find it relevant or read it at all.

To combat this kind of error, we have to build links with the mass of students, take our ideas to the students, discuss them and the response. It is vitally important that this process take place fully for every campaign and prior to any call for action. This is done through direct contact, through propaganda and agitation leaflets, through mass meetings and Soc Soc discussion meetings.

Student Unions Tactics

In order to arrive at correct tactics towards student unions we have to assess the nature of these institutions and the role they play in the student movement.

To a large extent, student unions have been formed by college authorities either under pressure by the students or to prevent such pressure. In the process, these college authorities either keep direct control of these unions through members of the administration holding office, as is the case in many colleges of Technology and of Further Education even at the present time, or at least keep indirect, financial control of these unions, which is common to all colleges and universities. College authorities see the role of student unions as a buffer between them and the mass of students, as their first line of defence or attack. The formation of local student unions was the embryo of the move towards students' "participation" in various college committees and governing bodies, which is seen as the best method of containing students' militancy.

The developing awareness and militancy of students in recent years is leading to the increasing use of student unions by the ruling class to oppose students' struggles. Closer and closer co-ordination between union bureaucracies and college administrations are being achieved. For instance, in the struggle waged by the Socialist Society at Regent Street Polytechnic to have a window display in solidarity with the Palestinian people, the Union Council acted in complete collusion with the governing body, who were determined to ban the display and went so far as to rip it down themselves. There, the Union President became the spokesman for the governing body, receiving hourly instructions from the Secretary of the Governors in the week-long confrontation with the students. The case of the National Union of Students as the national student organisation acting on behalf of the ruling class as a whole to smash students' struggle is even more clear. In the campaign against the racist measure of the Government's Department of Education and Science in virtually banning foreign students from halls of residence financed by local education authorities, the NUS attempted to take over the campaign and steer it on to the harmless road of signing petitions and lobbying parliament. (This road ended in pathetic failure when only 50 students, mostly union bureaucrats, turned up to an NUS national lobby of parliament.) Nowadays, NUS President Jack Straw is touring the country from one "trouble spot" to another attempting to mislead and sabotage every student struggle.

With student unions acting as the front line of the ruling class, what should be our attitude towards them? It is the attitude of any revolutionary towards reactionary institutions. That is, in so far as they succeed in attracting the masses, it is our duty to work within them to reach that section of the masses which otherwise we would not be able to reach. Local student unions (as differentiated from the NUS which has virtually no support among the rank and file) succeed in general in attracting students to their functions and there is a

feeling of identification with these unions by the majority of students, making it important for revolutionary students to participate in their activities. However, we do not participate to give these bourgeois institutions credibility or prestige. On the contrary, we do so in order to expose their reactionary nature and leadership.

For instance, we go to union meetings and encourage others to go not in order to make these meetings quorate or to play the parliamentary game (with points of order, "my learned friend", and the rest of the Westminster gobbledegook), but to put our point of view on all issues under discussion and to introduce political issues. Our aim always is to raise the political level of the participants and gain support among the mass of students. The same thing can be said for taking part in union elections. We do so in order to use the platform afforded to us by these elections to put forward a clear revolutionary programme and reach a great number of students. The primary object is not to get elected for union offices. This does not mean that we do not fight to get elected, but that we should not opportunistically sacrifice our principles for the sake of getting elected. If we compromise our principles then we are cheating the students and if elected we will not be able to carry the majority of students with us on any genuine left wing policies. We will in fact slide further down the road of compromise. In fact the experience of London colleges like the School of Oriental and African Studies and Imperial College, where left wing unions have been in power for a year, show that the left wing students on council soon become bogged down with the bureaucratic running of the union and slowly get absorbed within the system in the college.

In dealing with student unions we have to be aware of two things. First that participating in these unions does not mean participating in every union activity. In some cases if we succeed in exposing union policies and mobilise the students against them then we should boycott these activities. The second point is that we should not fall in the trap of everything through the students union. It is very important for us to carry on independently with our own propaganda, meetings etc. Participation in union activities is only one way of getting across to a large section of the student body.



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SIXPENCE

defeat ruling class strategy

The government is in the process of introducing a major re-organisation of the higher education system. This re-organisation is necessary if the monopoly capitalists of Britain are to compete effectively with their counterparts in the U.S. and the continent. More engineers, technicians, economists, middle managers and other cogs are required to fill their allotted slots in the capitalist system and to provide a surplus for the capitalists to have a choice. Thus the number of full time students is to be doubled by the 1980's (from 376,000 to 727,000 in England and Wales alone). At the same time, British imperialism is gripped with an economic and financial crisis that is getting more intense every day. The claims by Jenkins and other Labour government "miracle makers" of a very convenient "economic recovery" in an election year are of no consolation to any-

body when the unemployment figures of over 500 for December 1969 were the highest since 1963. This crisis is forcing the government to reduce even further the meagre expenditure on education and social services. The government's plan for the sevenies thus includes not only a doubling of the number of students but a cut in the average cost of training students. This is to be achieved through their scheme for New Polytechnics and through the Sherrill-Williams' 13-point proposals including the student/staff ratio by

Students bust pro-US meeting

Lt. Col. Vo. Military Attache at the 'Vietnamese Embassy', visited Goldsmiths' College on 20th. Jan. to speak at the invitation of the Conservative Society. Before an audience of 100 students Ve began to hand out his garbage- a prepared speech presumably written by an American. He thanked us for the goodwill we had shown him and proceeded to

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