



# The Platform of the Opposition

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## Introduction

1. At the March 2005 conference of Workers Power Britain the majority voted for a set of entirely wrong perspectives. The majority was small and the organisation was, effectively, split down the middle. The majority was led primarily by comrades from the International Secretariat (either still on that body or having served recently on that body). This majority, in the run up to the March conference, had organised itself as a tendency and conducted a fight to defeat the positions of the former National Committee majority of WPB. The documents of this debate are available in the WPB Internal Bulletins. They are the starting points for understanding why we are now launching a renewed tendency struggle on the basis of a new document. We fully accept that many of the examples in this tendency document are ?British-centred? so to speak. This is because of the origins of the struggle in Britain. However, we are convinced that the problem is an international one and we are sure that other sections will have examples of how the wrong perspectives of the International Secretariat have manifested themselves in other countries besides Britain.
2. At the March 2005 conference supporters of the former National Committee majority ? now a minority - declared themselves a tendency on the basis of the documents that were defeated at conference. These documents were correct at the time of the debate and have retained their validity in the period since the conference. They remain the founding documents of the new Opposition. We are now much clearer, however, in our understanding of the roots of the IS led majority positions in WPB. They lie in an erroneous set of international perspectives and tasks adopted by the last Congress of the LFI (the sixth congress) ? perspectives which many of us (though not all) voted for at the time but which we now all recognise to be fundamentally flawed. The lessons of the application of these perspectives in the British and other sections show it is time to re-assess. We hope that this new platform of the Opposition Tendency will be a starting point for a re-orientation of the whole of the League.
3. We submit this platform, as the basis for our struggle to defeat the positions of the IS led majority, not only in WPB ? where this struggle began ? but also throughout the LFI. We submit it as the basis for an international tendency struggle during the time between now and the opening of the next pre-congress discussion period. It is intended to form the basis for a struggle to convince the membership of the League as a whole that we are right. We hope to convince the leadership and membership of the LFI of the need to correct our perspectives. What we present here is a critique of the decisions of the sixth congress and their application (as we said before, mainly focusing on WPB). In the pre-seventh congress discussion period we will seek to embody our critique in draft perspectives and tasks documents to be discussed at the pre-Congress IEC. Our aim will be to win the IEC to our positions. However, if the current LFI leadership majority on the IS/IEC fails, at that meeting, to change course we will have no hesitation in declaring a faction and fighting for the leadership of the LFI at the Congress.
4. In the course of the WPB conference debate the supporters of the IS characterised the supporters of the former National Committee majority as methodologically wrong (tailist) and perspectively gloomy (pessimists). In particular the majority believed that the documents advanced by the former National Committee majority embodied this gloomy, and tailist method. Any objective reading of those documents reveals that such a characterisation is nonsense. But the characterisation is no mere polemical exaggeration. It flows from the radically false position of the majority.
5. These charges against the Opposition are the direct product of the majority?s own totally wrong perspective for the current period ? a world ?pre-revolutionary period? (World Political and Economic Perspectives adopted at the Sixth

Congress). This wrong characterisation of the period has resulted in a dangerous shift by the majority towards voluntarist and sectarian methods of party building, towards a schematic interpretation of perspectives and towards a fetishisation of simplistic 'key slogans' as the answer to every class struggle crisis. Methodologically, the current majority is in grave danger of embarking on the road of the post-war Trotskyist organisations - namely of transforming its 'perspective' into a doctrine. The documents the IS helped author for Workers Power Britain in 2005 together with the pre-conference Tendency Platform that one of the IS' leading members wrote represent the first step on this road by the IS. We are urging them to step back from this course.

6. While the impact of this approach has been negative on aspects of our current intervention into the class struggle, thankfully it has not yet led to a decisive liquidation of our programme in either a sectarian or opportunist fashion by the majority. We must change direction before it does. One of the founding documents of our international tendency, 'The Death Agony of the Fourth International and the tasks of Trotskyists today?', explained that the degeneration of the Trotskyist movement (degenerate Trotskyism - centrism) did not begin with programmatic errors, but with perspectival errors. We wrote:

'The transformation of the Marxist understanding of crises, of war, of revolution from events into long processes was the result of purblind empiricism which sought at all costs to prolong the 'revolutionary perspective'.'

In our opinion the documents of the sixth congress, as defended and further elaborated by the majority, are guilty of a similar error. Events are collapsed into a prolonged 'period', and the period remains 'pre-revolutionary' on a world scale no matter what. If we are to prevent the kind of programmatic collapse that engulfed degenerate Trotskyism we must correct these wrong perspectives immediately. We are confident that this will happen.

### **Catastrophism and perspectives**

7. The perspectival method of the IS majority can be characterised as 'catastrophist'. That is, they argue that the period we are in is marked by the imminence of catastrophe - economic and political crisis, inability of capitalism to expand, inability of bourgeois politics to continue containing the class struggle etc. All of this is because globalisation is exhausted and represents only a regime of stagnation and crisis. If we suggest anything other than this prolonged state of acute crisis then we get charged with pessimism. The characterisation of the world as having entered a 'pre-revolutionary period' lies at the heart of the majority's catastrophism. By this phrase the comrades mean:

' that globalisation is a phase of acute imperialist economic and political crisis

' that the working class and other movements are moving onto a generalised offensive as a result of this crisis

' that the task of the hour is building parties and the international in order to prepare for power in the period ahead.

8. These positions are summed up in the political and economic perspectives passed by the Sixth Congress of the LFI: 'With the turn of the century, we have entered a new period. Globalisation - the latest phase of imperialism - has exhausted most of its economic dynamism. It has entered a period of stagnation. US imperialism will try to defend and increase its world dominance. It will try to deepen globalisation under its rule. But it will come up against its inner limits, against the rise of imperialist rivals and, most important of all, against a growing, dynamic workers' resistance and anti-capitalist movement. In short, we are entering a pre-revolutionary period. We are entering a period in which the international working class needs to prepare for the final overthrow of the system on a global scale, by rallying the forces necessary to lead the masses in a new world party - a new International.'

There are very serious errors of perspective in this paragraph.

9. First, globalisation has not exhausted most of its economic dynamism. Indeed, in many countries where globalisation has had an enormous impact, such as China, India and even Brazil, it has led to economic growth. This growth continues. You do not have to believe that the world is a crisis free capitalist utopia to recognise that the world economy has undergone periods of considerable growth as a direct result of globalisation and that such growth can continue in the period ahead. Today the impact on the world economy of the opening up of the former degenerate workers' states to capitalist exploitation has led to a new round of growth for a globalised capitalism that had been crisis ridden through the 1970s and early 1980s. This process is not yet exhausted. The growth of China, the recovery of Russia and of course the growth of India (though not a former degenerate workers' state) do not indicate that we are

yet in a period of world-wide stagnation.

10. Second, inter-imperialist rivalry is of course lodged within the system. Moreover, the Iraq war brought such rivalry to the fore. A major split occurred. But, we are far from this element of the world situation becoming an 'inner limit' to the USA's drive for domination. There are very few signs, as yet, of the US facing a challenge to its supremacy from imperialist rivals. Of course it has rivals, notably the Franco-German block in the EU. But it is clear that this 'old Europe' block is in a weaker position today to challenge the US in any real sense. Indeed the US is garnering allies in the EU, many of them, against 'old Europe', and it does not look the slightest bit worried about France and Germany's opposition to its foreign policy. The US' growing rivals 'Russia and China' probably pose a greater threat to US dominance in the medium to long term. We are not entering a period in which the immediate perspective is one of potential inter-imperialist war as a result of the 'exhaustion' of globalisation.

11. Third, workers' resistance of course exists. It always does. There is never class peace on the planet. The Opposition is very far from being possessed by doom and gloom with regard to the class struggle. We are not pessimists. We recognise that resistance is a vital feature of the political situation. But is resistance growing in the way the congress perspectives document suggests? Are workers and anti-capitalists moving onto a generalised offensive in a way that can lead to international struggles interacting in an explosive and increasingly synchronised way? Is there evidence of revolutionary crises developing against the system as a pattern, rather than as distinct events generated by specific regional or national circumstances? The answer is, not yet. Any other answer goes from blind optimism to a total rejection of reality. There are tremendous crises and tremendous instances of resistance currently in several countries in Latin America. In Bolivia and Venezuela there are real revolutionary/pre-revolutionary crises. But are these examples typical of the world situation or are they exceptions to that situation? Preparing for power is not on the agenda outside of a handful of crisis torn countries. It is not the global task of the hour for the entire working class. That situation could change, under the impact of a world recession or major political crisis. We do not exclude such a possibility. But is that the dominant feature of the current world situation? No. Yet the sixth congress perspectives argue that we are in a preparatory revolutionary stage already - 'preparing for power'. They are wrong. And in their totality, catastrophist .

12. We are sure that the comrades will say that we are exaggerating their characterisation and that the term 'pre-revolutionary period' is not the same as saying that we are either in a pre-revolutionary situation or revolutionary situation. But this is to play with words. The key to understanding the IS error is not their distinction between 'period' and 'situation'. The error is their use of the term 'pre-revolutionary'. The comrades' meaning is clear 'we are in the stage of preparation for the final overthrow of world capitalism.

13. After all, this is what Trotsky meant when, in 1938, he said that there was a world 'pre-revolutionary period'. For Trotsky this phrase meant that there was a world crisis characterised by economic decay and the march towards world war. That imminent world war was going to foment a world side series of revolutionary crises that would react, one against another. This was going to happen in the short term. When it happened Stalinism, social democracy and so on would move quickly to betray unless the tiny forces of the Fourth International could turn themselves into mass parties. Only the creation of mass parties in the immediate period ahead could resolve the crisis of leadership. And the crisis of humanity had been reduced to a crisis of leadership. Either mass parties would be built and revolutions would triumph 'in the next historical period at that' (Trotsky) or 'a catastrophe threatens the whole culture of mankind' (Trotsky).

14. Given that this is the clearest comparison of the use of the phrase 'pre-revolutionary period' that we have let us pose the question: is this what the majority means when it says we are in a world pre-revolutionary period? If so, then it is wrong and we must correct this assessment if we are to prevent ourselves becoming hopelessly disoriented in the period ahead. This position is catastrophism.

15. This is what leads the comrades to exaggerate the significance of every struggle, no matter how minor, and play down every reverse, no matter how major. This was an important component of the debate in Britain, but it applies elsewhere too. The comrades refused to accept that the decline of the anti-war movement after February 15th 2003 in Britain was anything other than a 'blip'. The impact of the decline on the wider movement, the political confusion it caused, the scaling down of mass activity that it resulted in and the difficulties that this posed to revolutionaries in

arguing for a way forward were all swept aside by the majority. Nothing had changed and therefore our 'key slogans' could be repeated ad nauseam as before. The movement would re-appear in the unions, despite the unions' consistently low strike figures and the growing strength of the national bureaucracy's hold over those unions. Indeed in the 2005 debate in the British section the majority seized on a one-sided interpretation of strike figures for 2004 in order to maintain their claims. The majority ignored the real state of the unions in Britain, a state revealed by the stagnation, or even slight decline, in union membership figures despite the expansion in employment. They ignored the fact that the rise in strike figures was modest and was a small increase on some of the lowest sets of strike figures ever recorded in British history.

16. Finally, the majority argued that the movement would re-emerge around the G8 mobilisations – even though a key feature of these mobilisations represents a resurgence of the most reformist wing of the anti-globalisation movement. The July 2 mobilisation in Edinburgh proved this. The relative marginalisation of the militant anti-capitalist wing at the mass demo and the considerably smaller scale mobilisations that were mounted directly against the G8 show that the anti-capitalist movement does not really exist in Britain beyond the centrists and their front organisations and the small groups (hundreds or so) of anarchists/liberarians. It has declined in other parts of Europe too. Most importantly, reformism is now much stronger in the wider anti-globalisation movement than at any time since Seattle. Yet the majority perspectives ignored this and simply talked Edinburgh up as the focus of a fight to create a UK social forum. And of course the forward movement of resistance would re-emerge at the next ESF, as we have vainly been hoping for it to do at Paris and London and at various EPA gathering in between.

17. The clearest example of how this catastrophism disorients people came with the comrades' claim that the London ESF had the potential to radically re-shape class politics in Britain. It didn't and it was fanciful to claim that it did. This is not how the LFI and its forerunners have analysed struggles and their impact on the balance of class forces.

### **Catastrophism and slogans**

18. A catastrophist method generally leads to the over-simplification of programmatic tasks facing the tiny communist minority. Because the situation is acute, argue the catastrophists, a handful of simple slogans provide the answer – the unifying way forward, a repeated again and again as though they were applicable to every struggle, every stage of struggle and every situation. This is the wrong method that led WPB to argue that we could supply the answers to the class struggle through our so-called 'whales'. In Britain the whales have been identified by the majority as:

- the new mass workers' party
- the rank and file movement
- social forums everywhere
- a new mass revolutionary youth international
- the fifth international.

19. These are the 'key slogans'. If this phrase means anything it means that they are the strategic answers to the immediate crisis that the workers' movement faces, the means of resolving the crisis of leadership. They must be elevated in importance above all other elements of our programme. Either that or the phrase 'key slogans' has no meaning at all.

20. The problems that this approach leads to can be demonstrated through our use of the slogan for the Fifth International. The use to which we put this slogan has become tied in with the perspective of the world pre-revolutionary period. There is little time left to resolve the crisis of leadership. We need the Fifth International now. This position also has its origins in the flawed documents of the Sixth Congress. The resolution on building the international today states: 'Important elements of a new mass international are taking shape. This process was expressed first in the wave of co-ordinated international protests against capitalist globalisation. It assumed mass and proletarian form in vast marches against imperialist war. And it achieved a political expression in the Social Forum in Florence, the largest and most extensive assembly of international working class and anti-capitalist movements since the 1920s, in a wave of international solidarity with the Palestinian people, and in a world-wide explosion of anger

against US imperialism. The call for demonstrations around 15th February 2003 issued by the first ESF conference led to an unprecedented co-ordination of world wide protest against war with Iraq; 10-15 million rallied to the streets against the imperialist drive to war.?

21. Once again schematic perspective triumphs over reality. The push towards international co-ordination is undoubtedly a factor of the current situation and helps in the fight for an international. The international opposition to the US war on Iraq was magnificent. But neither the ESF nor the marches against the war were purely a 'mass and proletarian form' of a new mass international taking shape?. And nor is a new mass international, in the sense of a new mass international party, 'taking shape?'. The mobilisations called for by Florence were considerably more complex than that statement suggests. They involved a coalition of forces with vastly differing political projects and class backgrounds. To posit this as the manifestation of the International in waiting, and to then, as we have done, ascribe undue importance to every gathering of the ESF movement as the 'make or break' meeting at which we could take a step towards this International, is totally wrong. The ESF is not the International in waiting. It has receded in importance since Florence 'as the London gathering conclusively proved' and the forces that lead it have blocked its evolution to the left at every turn. Its calls for action have found less response since February 2003. These are facts. They should alert us to reality 'that the formation of an international through a struggle at the ESF or WSF is not the most likely way in which a new international will be forged. Moreover while the movement has important proletarian forces (mainly reformist led) within it to which we should indefatigably relate it is not, as a movement, 'proletarian' in 'form?'. Only a totally skewed perspective could saddle us with such an approach.

22. The motive for such a skewed view of the ESF/WSF stems from the fact that for the majority the formation of the Fifth International is the task of the hour. We are no longer engaged in a process of patient explanation of the need for a revolutionary international. We are no longer painstakingly searching out co-thinkers in other tendencies whom we can hope to convince. Rather we are engaged now, in the immediate and direct sense, in the fight to form the international out of the forces around the ESF/WSF. The irony is that while we have poured resources into the ESF meetings, we have made important contacts from other areas of work. From the Argentinean PTS split SR, in Indonesia, in France. These potential co thinkers come either from previous work targeting the 'Trotskyist' groups or through our work with Revolution and our international website not from the ESF/WSF work.

23. As the Sixth congress resolution puts it: 'The question of the foundation of a new International has become a simple agitational slogan that can be easily understood and receive a sympathetic hearing in every struggle of workers, peasants, the urban poor and the revolutionary youth.' So, the extent of applause we get at the meetings of the ESF becomes the barometer for measuring the success of our 'simple agitation?'. This is ridiculous. Indeed such was the belief in the imminence of the 5th international in this movement that we were promised merely raising the slogan would be like a 'pistol shot' rallying major forces to our side. The experience has been that raising the slogan in increasingly rightward moving and bureaucratically run forums has had no impact at all. It was the promise of a magic solution, a shortcut to the forming of a new international, that avoided the painstaking tasks of arguing communist politics and programme with new layers of politically very raw anti capitalist activists, often of a libertarian, anti party inclination. The formation of the Fifth International is not a process taking shape now. It is a fight that we, with our tiny forces, have to carry out 'primarily through propaganda aimed at a small vanguard of already conscious 'socialist' militants' on a long term and persistent basis. To believe otherwise and to act as though we are near the formation of such an organisation is self-deception.

24. And it is self-deception, and self-delusion, that leads the comrades to apply exactly the same method with regard to the other united front 'key slogans?'. Each becomes the panacea to resolve the problems of the world movement. Each becomes a mantra. The new workers party slogan in Britain is an illustration of this. And the idea agreed at the last IEC that this slogan should now be taken up and used in France 'where both the SP and PCF are busy restoring their credibility in the aftermath of the referendum' beggars belief. In Britain it is the central unifying slogan we are told. Yet, the new workers party is nothing more than a united front slogan. Its application depends on an assessment of the balance of forces. Can we lever sections of the unions into breaking with the bourgeois (or in our case bourgeois workers?) party and entering into a united front for the formation of a new party? Within that united front we fight for

the adoption of a revolutionary programme. The possibility of doing this existed. Members of the Opposition were to the fore not only in developing the tactic in a manner appropriate to Britain but also in directly applying it in a range of different forums. The centrists and left reformists, including some of the most left wing trade union bureaucrats have sabotaged the movement towards a workers' party. We are now faced with a new situation - the existence of the Populist Respect; the alliance (often covert) between left Labour elements and left union leaders; a brewing row between the major factions in the Labour Party into which the major unions are preparing to intervene. All of this requires far more than just the repetition of the call for a new workers' party. In fact in the current political context in Britain the call for a workers' party is in danger of being used in an opportunist way. In the absence of any genuine attempts by workers to build such an initiative it becomes an abstract call that suggests that such a party will solve the political problems that these militants face. The danger is that workers are now being presented with a half way house as a strategy to break workers from Labour. This danger was revealed in the totally inadequate programme advanced as the basis of such a party in the June 2004 issue of Workers Power. That programme tacks on the call for revolution at the end purely as a means of concealing the threadbare transitional content of the rest of that it. As against this opportunist 'key sloganeering' method we should engage in hard arguments to build a revolutionary party while advancing concrete tactics and united fronts to break workers from reformism (G8, pensions, AFAR etc). Indeed it is becoming more important to engage in the arguments in favour of the revolutionary party. Yet, the comrades simply reiterate the old slogan and accuse those of us who favour a more rounded political and programmatic fight for a new revolutionary workers' party as a means of combating left reformism and centrism as 'tailist'!

25. Social forums everywhere, say the majority. Yet, the struggles out of which real social forums (by which we must mean working class action councils at least in embryo) could be built are not taking place, or are diffuse, episodic and short-lived. No matter say the majority, our slogan can unify these struggles and 'answer the problem'. The fact is, comrades, this is only occurring in the heads of comrades who believe that such 'key slogans' have a magical power to transform the situation.

26. Does this mean that the Opposition are in favour of 'dropping' all of these slogans? Not in the sense of permanently excluding them from our tactical armoury. We have never argued this. We recognise that many slogans and demands can come to the fore and be utilised in one period when they would be useless in another. We are absolutely in favour of dropping the use of these slogans as inter-related 'key slogans' which supposedly answer the crisis of leadership. And with regard to particular slogans we are in favour of dropping them right now. For example, where a slogan has patently outlived its usefulness we say drop it. There is nothing exceptional about that. It is Marxist to drop slogans that are of no use. After all, the slogans as articulated are merely calls for forms of the united front. Dropping them and arguing for a different form of united front, or a different course of action is no sin against Marxism. Thus we are against the slogan of Social Forums everywhere. This call is redundant in Britain. Saying that and finding new means and new slogans to take the struggle forward towards the goal of revolution is not tailist. It is elementary Marxist tactics.

27. In short we reject the majority method of privileging selected united front slogans over the agitational and propagandistic fight for communist politics in a whole range of struggles. We believe that this method of the majority represents a downgrading of the fight for the communist programme in the class. The only way the majority can justify this approach is because they are wedded to catastrophist perspectives.

### Catastrophism and Party Building

28. The resolution on building the League passed by the Sixth Congress was explicit that our party building plans were directly related to our perspectives. The resolution stated: 'Our perspective and slogan to build a new mass workers' international' and our fight for it be a revolutionary one from its start - has to be in the forefront of our propaganda and agitation. It clearly spells out the potential of the anti-capitalist movement, of the reawakening and reformed workers' movement and of the real possibility to build such a new international now. It is a major, indeed indispensable, tool for rallying the forces necessary to overcome the crisis of leadership of the world working class. It is a unifying theme, backed by our understanding and analysis of global capitalism and the present stage of imperialism, of our propaganda

and agitation.?

29. It is a pity that the real state of our organisation had not formed at least a joint-equal starting point for our plans. If it had these grand and utterly false claims about the immediacy of the formation of a new international party and about the correctness of our 'analysis of global capitalism' might have at least been tempered by a sense of the real state of our organisation. It is high time the leadership of the international organisation and the national leaderships all faced up to a fact that nearly all of us have been dodging ' and please note we do not exclude ourselves from blame, but now is the time to change course. Since 1997 the party building perspectives of the LRCI/LFI have failed miserably. Indeed we adopted the last set of perspectives ' in which we were to take a forced march towards a new international, grow everywhere - with 16 fewer members than we had at the fifth congress (though this fact was disguised by the Ukrainian charlatans who claimed 68 members). But even allowing for this deception we failed to take note of the fact that the League was not growing in any significant sense. We were in a very poor state in 2003, yet this was pushed to the background amidst enthusiasm for both World Revo (which had grown by 120 courtesy of the bogus section in Ukraine) and the burgeoning anti-capitalist movement. As a result the document focuses on a series of organisational methods of assisting growth. It does not tackle at all the real political problems that face us and the way in which those problems limit our ability to grow.

30. In the past members of the Opposition have either helped draft or supported growth based perspectives documents. It would be ludicrous for anyone, after all, to favour a perspective based on shrinkage. However, a leadership must honestly assess why its previous perspectives have failed. The current majority has not so far shown any willingness to do this. It will not face up to its ' to our collective ' failure to grow. In 2000 we stated as our aim the creation of an international tendency comprising small combat parties by the end of the decade. By 2005 we are nowhere near to fulfilling such a goal. It is time to call a halt to the perspectives of exhortation. The discovery that the Ukrainian section was bogus should have led the IEC to radically re-orient the organisation to deal with the fact that we had, in reality, shrunk as an organisation, between 2000 and 2003. But it refused to do this because it remains wedded to catastrophist perspectives. The real state of our organisation is less relevant to the majority than the process of an international in the making. Voluntarism has become the majority's chosen method of building our organisation. By voluntarism we mean that we set over-ambitious tasks for ourselves that take no real account of the forces at our disposal, the conditions under which we work, the features of the objective situation that face us. We then exhort comrades to fulfil these tasks and berate each other for not reaching our targets. All problems stem from subjective failings ' from the failings of the volunteers, from their lack of will. That is voluntarism and mars our party building at the moment. Moreover, it can lead to attempts to find short cuts, including short-circuiting debate and differences. It can lead to bullying and what Trotsky and Lenin both described as examples of 'bureaucratic rudeness'. We must ensure that none of this finds a place in the LFI. And to prevent it we must root out voluntarism.

31. The objective situation, say the majority, is perfect for growth. Zero growth is therefore inexcusable. If we don't grow, it must be the members' fault. The IS should therefore become a body engaged in the micro management of the sections' work so that this work is carried out in the voluntarist spirit of the Sixth Congress resolutions. This approach was expressed eloquently in the Tasks document of the January 2005 IEC: 'In current conditions, the objective situation provides no excuse for zero or negative growth. Every unit of the League must discover how to find new contacts, how to involve them in discussion groups and joint work with us, how to recruit them to the League.' There are and can be many reasons for zero growth or shrinkage. First, the objective conditions might well be more propitious in gaining an audience but we may find that the nature of the audience is less attracted to our politics than in previous periods ' why, because in the consciousness of thousands upon thousands of activists our ideas on class, party, programme and such like appear alien. The preceding period of defeats has had an impact on the outlook of activists that cannot be wished away by IS or IEC exhortations. Secondly, political problems can beset an organisation and, despite objective conditions, it can shrink. That is one reason why the LRCI shrank. We lost one of our biggest sections (the French) in between 2000 and 2003 for political reasons. Thirdly, in terms of 'discovering' new methods of trying to attract people let's get away from alchemy and towards establishing good practice. In our view the sections are generally good at organising ways of engaging contacts. They are generally open to experimenting with new methods of organising. They have risen, for example, to the challenge of building youth groups, supporting comrades engaged in

that work and trying to learn from it. Yet, none of this creativity is yielding results on the scale that the IS expects.

32. There has to be a reason for this. And there is. The problem is one of political orientation. The political obstacles to winning adherents to Trotskyism are real and sizeable. They are severely underestimated by the leadership and that leadership is spending less and less time providing political answers (resolutions that can orient us on the big events) and more and more time on micro management. If you think that the objective situation is sufficient to provide us with the basis for serious growth then you are bound to underestimate the political and elevate the technical. This is exactly what is happening and voluntarism has become the order of the day. It has to stop. It is self-defeating. The more that you operate with the notion that everything has to be done in double quick time the less you actually accomplish. The excuse is that everything has to be done in a mad rush because, as the Sixth Congress resolution puts it, the task of the day is for 'the international working class [needs] to prepare for the final overthrow of the system on a global scale, by rallying the forces necessary to lead the masses in a new world party - a new International.'

33. And yet, the lack of time for anything other than our direct 'interventions' into the struggle for leadership of the world working class (via demos, ESF and EPA meetings and such like) means that we are achieving considerably less as an international tendency than we did during the 1990s. In terms of our propaganda output, in terms of constructive engagement with potential co-thinkers, in terms of arming our comrades with a clear understanding of critical events through political resolutions and theses, in terms of cohering our tendency around realistic tasks and seeing them through to completion, and above all, in terms of net growth, we are down as a result of this voluntarism. And we seek solutions in yet more voluntarist practices, in believing that everything is down to 'professionalisation' or to the 'discovery' of new methods of doing things. There may be many things we can improve upon, but we will only do so if we start with a clear political understanding of where we are at, where the world is at and what we should be doing about both of these things. That requires a radical break from the belief that there are organisational solutions to our political problems. Organisational solutions will only follow on from a political re-orientation.

34. The problem is the IS shows no inclination to take stock of our failings. Our sections have either shrunk or not grown significantly. We have lost whole sections and we were seriously duped by the Ukrainians. We have small groups that are, or have been, crisis prone and cannot carry the scale of intervention envisaged by the Sixth Congress perspectives. And the impact of all of this on the League is very serious. Our cadre base has narrowed. The one sided activism set into motion by the Sixth Congress, alongside the decline in the development of our theory and propaganda, has had a negative impact on the education of the LFI as a whole. We have already seen the impact of this failure on WPB to devote resources and commitment to the cadre-isation of women and notably the WPB woman full timer. (See women's commission November 2004) Fewer people are now obliged to undertake more tasks. Of course some of this can be put down to inevitable wear and tear. But not all of it. Voluntarism increases the tears and wears people out quickly. And some of our problems undoubtedly stem from this approach. And if your response is to say 'no excuse?' then you are storing up an explosion for the organisation.

### **Catastrophism and Sectarianism**

35. Allied to voluntarism is a form of sectarianism in our party building that substitutes the creation of relatively minuscule fronts for engagement with much broader forces. This stems from a wrong attempt to replicate many of the methods by which the sections have built youth groups (Revo). The very looseness of Revo's politics 'its independence, its prioritisation of activism over ideological struggle, its openness to a range of wrong and muddled ideas being published in its pages' means that it can grow through ad hoc front campaigns that draw in the casual activist and hold them to Revo mainly through a continuation of activism. Such campaigns can and do attract small groups of activists to Revo's banner in this or that area and sustain or develop it as an organisation. We have no quarrel with this method of building Revo (although it is not and should never be allowed to become the only way of building the youth group).

36. However, we do have a quarrel with the proposals of the majority on replicating Revo's methods of front building for the sections themselves. This, it seems to us now, is what is meant in the Sixth Congress' resolution on building the League when it refers to, 'the current need to build looser organisations around us'. These are fronts, by any other

name. And they are becoming the favoured method of the leadership. Of course a front campaign can have a certain limited justification in certain circumstances (such as the absolute absence of campaigns by the wider workers' movement on pivotal issues). But this is the exception, not the rule. The danger is that the exception is becoming the rule for the majority. Where the wider movement moves, we say set up our own campaign. Instead of looking at the more difficult tasks of how we place ourselves at the centre of broader movements, of how we can expand our positions of influence in mass organisations, of how we can put ourselves in a position to conduct an open struggle with the reformists (or influential left centrists) the leadership advances front campaigns run by ourselves.

37. The clearest example of this in Britain was the proposal to set up a campaign called 'Asylum Lies?'. This was proposed by an IS member as a campaign, directed at mobilising people with us to undertake mass leafleting of working class estates, football grounds, town centres, workplaces etc. Out of this work we would create a new campaign run by us. It would have our politics because we would write the leaflet on which it was to be based. We would therefore create a new periphery for ourselves from this front initiative. The only thing was, it would not mention WPB. It would be created in the name of an organisation 'Your Are Being Lied To ?' which has no existence, no address separate from us, no existence separate from us. Indeed the campaign was not conceived of as, primarily, an objective necessity for the class. It was motivated at the NC explicitly as 'a proposal for integrated campaigning initiative?' which would help integrate 'the work of the WP branches and Revo?'. At the time this idea was put forward the principal task for revolutionaries was to fight to stop the movement, Unite Against Fascism (UAF), from becoming 'under the day-to-day leadership of the rightward moving SWP ? a popular frontist, liberal campaign. The UAF, which had been endorsed by the TUC, unions etc was preaching a pacifist liberal approach that would do nothing to stop the rise of the BNP in the forthcoming Euro elections. But it was mobilising sizeable numbers in several key areas and our task was to intersect with it to pose the revolutionary alternative - a task that we successfully undertook, in Manchester, for example, by leading the UAF forces into a direct and well publicised confrontation with Le Pen. The task was not to focus on setting up our own tiny front to serve the needs of our own small numbers of members and supporters in Revo and WPB through an Asylum Lies Campaign. This was especially so because in virtually every town there were well staffed campaigns and organisations doing far more work on the asylum issue than we could ever dream of undertaking. This was sectarianism in action. The real objective circumstances meant that the campaign never came to anything and was soon dropped as a campaign. The outcome was a leaflet (a very good, well written leaflet) which has proved popular with many of the already existing campaigns. The down side is that this leaflet does not mention, anywhere, the fact that it was written and produced by WPB. Had we produced it as the basis of WPB's anti-racist propaganda in the election we could have gained as an organisation. By putting it out as the basis of a front campaign we gained very little from this 'integrated campaigning initiative?.

38. This sectarianism is tied to the false perspective too. Build the party quickly through fronts is the message. Expand the membership at all costs. Conveniently overlooked, however, is the fact that while there may be a very small world where such a front may carry some credence the larger world passes it by and the hard task of fighting reformism within the mass organisations gets short-circuited by such sectarianism.

39. In our youth work fronts can play a role of limited value. But in terms of building the revolutionary party in the wider class they are a dead end ? they are an escape from reality not a means of dealing with it. Enough 'revolutionary?' organisations have gone down this road in the past for us to be able to see the danger. And thankfully members of the majority themselves seem to have recognised this when the proposal to extend Revo's 'Dump the Debt?' campaign to WPB as its main priority in the run up to the G8 was heavily defeated at the National Committee, with majority members voting with the Opposition.

## **Our alternative**

40. We have identified the root cause of the majority's errors as lying in the catastrophist perspectives adopted by the Sixth Congress. We have seen how the documents of that congress have skewed our tasks to suit these false perspectives and have led to voluntarism, sectarianism and a form of slogan-fetishisation. The starting point of our alternative has to be a revision of the decisions of the Sixth Congress on perspectives and tasks. In bald thesis form, our

alternative to the IS approach and perspective would be:

? in place of catastrophism in political and economic perspectives (i.e. economic stagnation and a pre-revolutionary period) we would argue that we are in a period of transition in which on a world scale the workers' movement is beginning to revive after the collapse of Stalinism and the neoliberal of the 80s and 90s. The revival is uneven, both in terms of different countries and in terms of different wings of the workers and anti-capitalist movement. It is taking place with old leaderships still intact in many places but also with new ones ? reflecting the drift away from class identification in politics that occurred in the aftermath of the collapse of the Stalinist States ? espousing populism or new variants of reformism less tied to the structures and ideologies (social democracy and Stalinism) of the past;

? in place of the immediate task of forming the new international out of the forces assembled around the WSF/ESF and preparing for the global seizure of power our immediate task is to try and intersect with the reviving workers' movement and maximise the influence of communist ideas within its ranks. This requires the patient expansion of our work inside the mass organisations of the workers' movement. Given how pitiful, internationally, our implantation in the workers' movement over the next period this work must be a priority equal to our youth work. It is a task that will require the extensive and imaginative deployment of the united front with reformist workers around a series of generally partially, but partially generalised, struggles as and when they occur;

? in the struggles that do occur we will seek to provide leadership both organisationally and politically through the relevant and focused application of our general revolutionary programme. We will break that programme down into easily understood answers that can take the struggles forward. In other words we will restore the transitional method to our method of intervention in place of the elevation of fetishised ?key slogans?;

? in place of a fixation with the WSF/ESF as the international in waiting we will revive our tradition of seeking co-thinkers amongst international political tendencies by engaging with those we identify as the most leftward moving centrists and by allocating resources to a political dialogue with such forces. Engaging and winning supporters from these tendencies is vital if we are to break out from our current tiny base of six grouplets in six countries;

? We will continue to intervene in the anti capitalist mobilisations orienting to the radicalised youth drawn into these struggles. This will take priority over an orientation to ESF gatherings of ?tops? at EPA meetings. At such actions we will need to prioritise political arguments around socialism, the need for a party, the weakness of anarchism, as a means to win these forces to communism. This together with joint militant actions against the organisations of imperialism G8, IMF, WTO etc will be the road to building Revolution and the League.

? in place of the voluntarism that is wearing out our resources and that undermines the building of a truly collective leadership we are in favour of a realistic party building perspective. In the next period we need an overhaul of our propaganda output. The forms of propaganda can be debated but the development of its political content through the re-establishment of collective methods of working, rather than through the voluntarist agenda setting (followed by failure) that characterises the workplans of the PC\IS is the first task. We need a more effective political leadership of the international, through a strengthened IEC and, in the section, through stronger leadership bodies. To develop these we need to pay close attention to and focus on the training and development of comrades through general and specialist schools, through more systematic education and of course through encouraging open debate in our ranks so that we can develop critical thinkers. We also need realistic plans for the expansion of our influence in the mass organisations ? the long term planning and development of exemplary work, the use of that work to promote our organisations, the use of a base to develop real campaigns involving real forces. These tasks must take priority. In youth work, much of the work Revo carries out is excellent but it does need to begin a discussion about how it can reach beyond the radicalised middle class youth and start recruiting working class youth on a much broader scale; last but not least we need to revitalise our tactics towards the mass reformist organisations;

? in place of sectarian front building we need to take our place as the revolutionary wing of the broader campaigns set up by the labour movement. The idea that we have to start out by attacking these campaigns because of their popular frontist character and set up rivals to them is nonsense. We do not do this with regard to the anti-capitalist movement (which is every bit as popular frontist) why should we do it with the campaigns set up by the reformist labour movement? Of course the drift towards both popular frontism and populism has to be fought in these campaigns AND in the anti-capitalist anti-globalisation movement ? but from within them, not by fronts set up alongside them; in particular in relation to the anti-capitalist movement we should elevate the fight for revolutionary socialist politics and class differentiation within the movement over the fight to persuade it (or sections of it) to ?declare for the Fifth

International?.

41. None of these measures will provide the comrades who currently support the IS the quick fix that catastrophist promises and voluntarist stampedes can give you. But they will re-orient the organisation for the actual tasks it faces by turning it towards the real world and away from the schematics that the League is currently focused on. We invite comrades throughout the League to sign this platform.

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