

Reviewing the Concept of the "Dual Task"
and Our Perspectives for the Growth of
Reformism, Centrist and the Building of
Revolutionary Parties

Friday, July 23

Part 1 (Session 7) : 9:00AM - 12:00PM NYC
/ 15:00 - 18:00 Brussels / 21:00 - 00:00
China

Part 2 (Session 8) : 1:00PM - 4:00PM NYC /
19:00 - 22:00 Brussels / (Saturday) 01:00 -
04:00 China

**THE 'DUAL TASK': IS IT STILL RELEVANT
FOR ISA?**

The dual task: the understanding that sections of the International should assist in the rebuilding of working class political organisations and organisations of struggle, in addition to developing our own forces. A concept that sought to take account of the collapse of Stalinism and reorientate our forces in the context of its effects on the workers movement. In this text we will trace the origins and evolution of the concept in the Committee for a Workers International (CWI) which preceded the ISA and point to the issues which the concept raises today.

In the 1990s capitalism was restored in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. The international bourgeoisie was triumphant. Stalinist parties degenerated in a nationalist and reformist direction; some re-named themselves, almost all were marginalised. Social-democratic parties, in an era of sharp defensive battles of the working class and heavy defeats, distanced themselves from even mild-reformist programmes. They adapted to neo-liberalism, cuts and privatisation. Any link with the active working class and youth was lost as parties were 'hollowed out' and became the preserve of careerists and bureaucrats. A process we described as 'bourgeoisification'.

The idea of socialism was no longer even a matter of 'holiday speechifying', it now

became a 'dirty word'. An ideological offensive by the bourgeoisie attempted to eradicate a socialist consciousness which had been consolidated by experiences in the inter-war period and during WW2. Class consciousness itself, which had peaked in the trade union struggles of the 1960s and 1970s, was also thrown back and a bosses' offensive (including the smashing of the air traffic controllers' union in the US under Reagan and the defeat of the miners' strike by Thatcher in the UK) drove union membership into decline.

For a long period, since the 1950s, our predecessor organisations, the British Militant tendency and then the CWI (founded in 1974), had as a general rule applied the tactic of entrism. This meant joining social-democratic and left parties and fighting for a Marxist position while building our own forces. In some countries this tactic was successful, especially in the UK where at one point the CWI had three MPs who had been elected as Labour candidates. The tactic had been based on the perspective that capitalist crisis would drive workers to seek political solutions through their mass organisations which would lead to sharp struggles for influence within social-democracy and create the basis for splits and mass wings and parties of the left. But in the 1990s, instead of the right wing being 'vomited out' it was the left which was under attack with witch-hunts against Marxists and the left.

In this situation our predecessor organisation, the CWI faced serious questions. A major discussion was launched over the viability, or even the possibility, of continuing entrism work. What became known as the Open Turn debate lasted for six months between summer 1991 and January 1992. Starting with sections in England and Wales and in Scotland, CWI sections shifted to pursue independent work throughout the 90's. This included a particular - and often international - focus on youth work. As new left formations began to emerge - as with Rifondazione Comunista in 1991 - the CWI orientated to these

developments and integrated the lessons into our perspective for a new period.

At the time the perspective was for the development of these new left formations (NLFs) which Marxists would orientate towards and take part in. It was emphasised that the revolutionary party should not allow itself to be absorbed into the new formations ('liquidationism'). On the contrary they should retain their programme, identity and structures. However the leadership of Scottish Militant Labor did make the mistake of dissolving their organisation into the broader Scottish Socialist Party. This led to a long and clarifying debate for the International which concluded with the departure of the majority of SML who rapidly disintegrated into the broader SSP.

This was the basis for the concept of the 'dual task', according to which, in addition to building our own forces, which remained the most important task, revolutionaries needed to play a role in the construction of these new organisations of the working class.

The CWI had a perspective that new left formations could develop into mass workers parties. This was partially revised on the basis of the experience of the NLFs. At different stages a growing number of new formations emerged: the Nouveau Parti Anticapitaliste in France, DIE LINKE in Germany, PSOL in Brazil, Podemos in Spain, Syriza in Greece. This is only a partial list. We can also add the mass phenomena around Jeremy Corbyn in Britain and Bernie Sanders in the US which did not lead to fully fledged organizations.

Where they emerged our comrades orientated towards these formations and often joined them, operating as a Marxist wing within them. Some of these parties were born out of mass struggles like Podemos in the Spanish State. SYRIZA came to power on the back of mass resistance to neoliberal austerity. The programmes of these movements or parties were generally quite limited and did not point beyond capitalism. They tended to focus heavily on

electoral politics and away from struggle. They have for the most part been unstable, dominated by petty-bourgeois layers, and most have become exposed by participation in capitalist coalitions. When SYRIZA came to power it utterly failed the working class, destroying itself in the process.

More recently we have seen the capitulation of Corbyn and Sanders and Podemos entering into a coalition government in Spain with the social democratic PSOE and moving further to the right. The results of our interventions have been mixed, more positive in some sections than others. Our interventions have in many cases been complicated by the lack of democratic structures and the active participation of a fresh layer of workers and youth. Nevertheless these formations were important experiences for a whole layer of society and offer rich lessons for future developments. And there still remain important NLFs whose trajectory is not fully determined (including PSOL in Brazil, France Insoumise, Quebec Solidaire and the PTB in Belgium).

The CWI leadership, in the form of its International Secretariat, saw the development of NLFs as central to our perspectives. They expected the emergence of NLF's to be a more general phenomena and for the crisis of 2008/9 to lead to a bigger rise in class struggle and accelerated political developments.

Perspectives were frustrated as developments were delayed and more complicated than the IS had allowed for. Without developed discussion to explain and understand those complications, some comrades have been lost to opportunist impatience. Splits in Ireland, the US, Germany and Brazil - although not the same - do have similar features i.e a focus on broad tasks and a loss of focus or appreciation for the needs of the revolutionary party. Eventually we witnessed the opportunist degeneration of the International Secretariat itself in its search

for electoral success and prestige when its perspectives were not fulfilled.

On the national terrain the CWI made important breakthroughs through mass work in several countries including Ireland where we elected several people to parliament, led a series of mass working class campaigns and more recently in the US with the election and re-election of Kshama Sawant. Inevitably this work created real opportunist pressures for small revolutionary organizations which the sections sought to counteract. But in the case of the Irish section, the IS ignored the warnings of the Irish leadership about the dangers to the party of endless mass work and substituting itself for the wider movement and they instead urged that the Irish section simply 'do both'. In this context, one question this review should consider is to what extent the dual task concept was misapplied or open to misapplication.

While the issue of the dual task in this review, in a sense, has an immediate origin in the dispute about the work of the Irish section which was a key feature of the debate and split in 2009, it is also much broader. It must include an evaluation of our experience in a number of countries with mass work and the NLFs. It must also include discussion about the perspectives for new left and new workers parties in the new period that has opened up.

But it also has to take into account that the dual tasks concept evolved in many sections to embrace trade union work and our intervention in other struggles. This broader application is centered on the idea that our job is not simply to recruit to the party in the different arenas of our work -- including intervening in the class struggle and movements of young people and oppressed sections of society -- but to also assist in the building of these struggles and generally to assist in the rebuilding of traditions and organizations of the working class and oppressed.

At the turn of the millennium, there was an important movement against globalisation

with wide international youth mobilisations (Seattle, Genoa) which the CWI fully participated in as it did in the movement against war in Iraq. But since then we have seen important social movements, particularly movements of oppressed layers, emerge in an explosive way – the women's movement, LGBTQI+ movements, and Black Lives Matter. The CWI failed to respond adequately to movements such as these or develop a plan for a clear Marxist intervention fearing 'contamination' by 'alien' ideas. This was one of the key issues in the debates which led to the split in the CWI in 2019 and the formation of International Socialist Alternative (ISA). During those debates it also became clear that the failure to open up discussion and debate had damaged our ability to act as an international.

So this is indeed a complex and multifaceted discussion. This review topic covers an evaluation of the origins and history of a central concept in the history of the International, stretching back almost thirty years. We must also trace how the concept was used in more recent years leading up to the splits in 2019 and the individuals and groups who have since left our ranks. However, it is also an opportunity to hone our perspectives for the future - the development of new political formations today, the processes unfolding in the trade unions, the role of movements from below and new layers taking a leading role in struggles and the consciousness of different layers within the working class. The seven questions below can act to stimulate initial discussion but they have to be filled with a content which draws on the rich experience of the International and our sections over the last decades. This discussion will be a key part of our balance sheet of previous perspectives, interventions and the steps forward and backward in the process of building our own forces to meet the complex challenges of a new era.

Questions:

1. How has the concept of the dual tasks evolved since it was first enunciated in the early 90s?
2. How widely should the concept be applied? Does it only relate to the question of building new workers' parties? To rebuilding the labor movement more generally? To rebuilding fighting traditions and movements of social struggle?
3. Is this still a useful concept for the work of the ISA? Does "dual" imply that the tasks are equal in weight?
4. What are the implications of our experience with mass work in different sections for the usefulness of the concept?
5. What are the dangers of ultra-leftism/sectarianism on the one hand and opportunism on the other in this period and how can they be avoided?
6. What are the perspectives for the development of broad workers' parties internationally in the next period? Of broad left parties? How will these differ from the "new left formations" of the past period?
7. What does it mean to orient to the advanced sections of the working class and youth?

Recommended readings -

The origins of the concept

1/ Conclusion from the Rise of Militant, 1994

(in this document)

2/ Excerpts from the Name Change Debate, May 1996

(in this document)

3/ Excerpts from the 7th World Congress Document, 1998

(in this document)

On the development of New Left Formations

4/ Problems of building new parties, December 2007

<https://internationalsocialist.net/en/2007/12/theory>

5/ Summer School report, July 2010

<https://internationalsocialist.net/en/2010/07/our-activity-2>

6/ The Rise and fall of SYRIZA, July 2017

<https://internationalsocialist.net/en/2010/07/our-activity-2>

From the dispute 2018/2019

7/ Rebuilding the Working-Class Movement & Forging a Revolutionary party today - Kevin McLoughlin (in this document)

8/ Socialist Alternative (US) EC response to TM, PA etc - members bulletin 120 (in this document)

From the IC World perspectives document 2021

<https://internationalsocialist.net/en/2021/03/world-perspectives>

9/ Struggles & Consciousness: The 2010's on Steroids - 27 paragraphs

10/ Political polarization deepens - 5 paragraphs

11/ New Left Formations - 23 paragraphs

1/ 'Conclusion' from the Rise of Militant (1994)

...the bourgeoisification of the "traditional organisations" of the working class could be reflected in Britain with a serious split from the Labour Party under a right-wing Blair-led Labour government.

The outline of such a split is reflected even in the Tribune newspaper, which has played the role of 'Left' apologists for the right-wing Labour leadership. Its columns are full of denunciations of Blair and his acolytes. Hugh Macpherson, its political correspondent, now implicitly concedes what Militant Labour has been arguing for some time; the working class base of the Labour Party is being systematically dismantled by the Blair leadership. He writes:

'There is now no doubt whatsoever that a new party is being constructed within the Labour Party that has no connection with the old, save that it provided a structure that could be used to create the new party. Tony Blair said so as he traded with Rupert Murdoch and his editors in their island paradise. By the next election he said with breathtaking sophistry it would literally be a new party, as those who joined it after he became leader will outnumber the previous members.

We support the creation of a new mass socialist party. Militant's success in the past arose from a correct understanding of the objective situation of British capitalism and of the working class. But this alone was not sufficient to guarantee success. We were also able to identify the key issues at each stage, to then formulate a clear programme and through bold organisation to carry the struggle through to a conclusion.

Flair and initiative matched to a careful assessment of the situation led to spectacular results in the Liverpool battle, the poll tax struggle and in the battle against the fascists in the 1990s. An equal if not greater tactical adroitness will be demanded of Marxists in the next period. The political terrain is now much more complicated, demanding a flexibility in approach together with an intransigence and

implacability in defence of the Marxist programme and perspectives. Militant Labour will energetically pursue the task of building its own organisation.

But in the words of Marx, socialists "have no interests separate and opposed to those of the proletariat".

At the same time as building a powerful Marxist, force Militant Labour will do all in its power to help those workers, who do not yet fully agree or are not yet prepared to join our ranks, to build the widest possible working class force to resist the bosses in industry but also to politically enhance the power and the position of the working class.

Therefore, while building Militant Labour we would be prepared to join with other socialist forces to create the basis of a genuine mass socialist party in Britain.

One thing is clear, the ground has been prepared for colossal social and political upheavals in Britain and throughout world capitalism before this decade is out. Militant Labour has demonstrated in the past its ability to link its programme with mass movements of the working class.

However, the dramas in which it has participated will be as nothing to the mighty unfolding of events which looms. Marxism will once more arise with such force that it will astound bourgeois sceptics and socialist "fainthearts" alike. Enriched by the experience of the last 30 years, in the tumultuous events which historically impend the ideas of Militant Labour will be embraced by tens of thousands, then by hundreds of thousands and millions.

This is the indispensable precondition for the labour movement to begin to refashion the world, to replace outmoded, decrepit capitalism - threatening to drag humankind into an historical abyss - with a society of human solidarity, a socialist society.

2/ From the Name Change Debate (1996)

'No Mass Left will Develop in the Blair Government'

One thing is clear, however; the Labour Party in Britain has gone much further than most of its European counterparts (indeed it is now a 'model' for all the 'modernisers' in the different social democratic parties). The membership is now overwhelmingly middle class. The rule changes mean that 'bonapartist' powers are concentrated in the hands of Blair and his entourage which effectively allows them to overrule decisions of the national conference. This has resulted in a weakening and, in future, probably a complete break with the trade unions. This means that the ability to change this party in a socialist direction is ruled out for a whole historical period and probably for ever.

No mass left wing, in the sense of the Independent Labour Party in 1932, will develop in protest against the pro-capitalist policies of a Blair Labour government. A parliamentary left will oppose Blair, and will probably eventually split away. However, they will not take a huge body of workers with them, for the simple reason that these workers no longer inhabit the Labour Party. A left split will be, in effect, a parliamentary split, which may then find an echo amongst socialist inclined workers looking for a new mass organisation but presently repelled by the narrowness and sectarianism of Arthur Scargill's SLP. All of this means that new tasks, with a new approach, need to be adopted by the Marxists in this period.

There is no doubt that in time the working class, through its experience of rotted capitalism, will begin to draw socialist conclusions. We have never accepted the idea that 'socialist consciousness is brought to the working class from the outside',

This does not mean, however, that the role of socialist intellectuals and of parties is of no consequence. To accept this idea would be to deny the role of the 'subjective factor', of parties and leaders in the formation of

socialist and class consciousness and particularly in helping to determine the speed at which this develops. While the proletariat will inevitably draw socialist, and even revolutionary, conclusions the role of a party and its leadership in speeding up the development of this consciousness can be quite decisive.

We have, in effect, a dual task at the present time. We must genuinely seek to collaborate with others in the development of a mass socialist party as an alternative to right-wing Labour. We should support all steps towards this, such as the formation of socialist alliances and at the same time we wish to build our organisation. Unlike the CPGB and others, we have no illusion that what is posed at this stage is the development of a mass revolutionary party, in the form of the Socialist Labour Party.

We are not approaching this question in precisely the same way as Trotsky did in the 1930s. In his discussions with the American SWP on how to put forward the slogan of a mass Labour Party Trotsky drew a distinction between what was possible and what was likely. Trotsky was in favour of fighting for the most radical programme possible and the greatest influence of the Marxists within a mass Labour Party. At the same time his perspective was that a mass party would develop, in the first instance, as a reformist, or possibly even as a centrist formation, both in programme and organisation. Nevertheless, the general approach of Trotsky was to fight for the most rapid crystallisation of a revolutionary party.

We face a somewhat different situation today. We have, we repeat, a dual task; to fight together with others for the formation of a mass socialist party and at the same time to seek on all occasions to strengthen our influence and membership. Arguing for a mass socialist party is not the same as arguing for a mass revolutionary party.

We are the revolutionary party, albeit a small one at this stage. We are arguing for the

formation of a mass party which will not be a 'Labour Party Mark II'. We advance the idea that it must be specifically socialist in its programme but with a form of organisation, federation, which can allow the participation of all genuine socialist currents and organisations, including our organisation. If it takes off, as it undoubtedly will at a certain stage, this in turn can provide the seed bed for the growth in influence of the revolutionary party and organisation, which in turn can lay the basis for a mass revolutionary party at a later stage.

Mass socialist party

The mass socialist party we envisage will have some of the features of a united front, although it will not be a united front in the classical sense. The IU (United Left) in Spain, combines the features of an electoral front and a party. And as with all united fronts it inevitably means that we accept a limitation, a compromise, on its programme and also on forms of organisation in order to get the project off the ground.

However, within the common framework, through our own publications, we have full freedom to put forward our full programme. In the discussions with Scargill's lieutenants, leading up to the formation of the SLP, we spelt out to them that we did not intend to act as we did when we worked within the Labour Party. We stated specifically that we did not intend to seek to immediately dominate the SLP. We even made the suggestion that no single party affiliating to a federal-type party should have the possibility of dominating the structures of the SLP.

In Scotland we have gone from the realms of theory to show in practice that this proposal was no bluff on our part. We proposed that in the Socialist Alliance that no single organisation should be able to get more than 40% of the positions within the alliance. Some of our opponents wished to limit this to 30%, but our proposal was accepted. Why have we adopted what was called, in the English civil war, a 'self-

denying ordinance'. This would be denounced as 'opportunism' by ultra-left sectarians, in the same way as Engels was characterised by the Marxian 'doctrinaires' in New York in the last century.

Our tactics on this issue are determined by the need to develop a basic socialist consciousness amongst the mass, a precondition for the development of the revolutionary tendency. In a sense it is part of the process of attempting to create an audience for our ideas.

While this approach represents a new departure for us, it in no way resembles the approach that some other organisations have adopted of 'building the left'. This usually involves political and organisational subordination to a few left leaders as a means of gaining influence' in place of the real growth in membership of the revolutionary organisation.

This is not the approach of our organisation today. We wish to build independent socialist organisations of the working class and at the same time the revolutionary party as well. We do not in any way hide our intentions, but proclaim it openly. Without an understanding of the main elements in the situation which confronts us it is impossible to correctly gauge what should be the public profile and with it the name of the organisation at the present time.

We are justifiably proud of the history and the record of our organisation under the banner of Militant. Scorned by the bourgeois and their labour movement mouthpieces, the name 'Militant' is a badge of honour. Militant is a symbol of organised working-class resistance in Liverpool, in the poll tax, in the battle against the racists and fascists, in the struggle to resist the right within the labour and trade union movement and to build a socialist and Marxist alternative.

Moreover, it is indisputable that in the reawakening of the working class some workers will turn to Militant precisely because of our political and theoretical

intransigence in the face of the ideological
offensive of the bourgeois, and the
capitulation of the right within the
movement to this.

3/ 7th World Congress document (1998)

Section Three: The former workers' parties

The last World Congress (6th) of the CWI undertook a thorough reappraisal of the role of, and perspectives for, the former traditional workers' parties. At that time in some countries there was a clear process towards the complete bourgeoisification of these parties. This was at an initial stage of development but since then it has become an international trend. Since the 1993 congress there has been a qualitative change in many of these parties. It has been necessary for us to develop our tactics and methods for building open independent revolutionary parties as a consequence of this changed situation.

The resolution adopted at the 6th World Congress, 'The traditional workers parties' explained: "The leadership has swung further to the right. In general they have embraced the bourgeoisie to a greater extent than before..." As a result of this development it concluded that: "In the minds of important layers the traditional parties are no longer associated with 'reforming' governments. To a greater extent than ever the 'reformists' have become the vehicle of counter reforms and consequently in opposition to big layers of the proletariat. They are even hated by a layer of the most combative elements, especially the youth."

The resolution went on to point out, "...the class basis of the traditional parties always assumed a two-fold character with both bourgeois and proletarian elements within them. We would make a mistake to approach the class basis of a party as being set in stone for ever.."

The majority of the sections of the CWI are currently undertaking open, independent work in order to intervene in the class struggle and win the new generation of workers and youth to Marxist ideas. This does not mean that the CWI has adopted "one world tactic". We have always been extremely flexible in developing our tactics. The tactic/s that are adopted by our sections are worked out after a careful evaluation of

the concrete situation that exists in the relevant country. This was reflected in the discussion about launching an independent, open organisation in Scotland in 1991/2. The CWI majority at that time argued that in Italy it was correct to undertake work inside the PRC. Since then we have adopted numerous tactical turns in some countries such as Brazil where our section undertook work for two years in the PSTU. Our section in the USA is working in the Labor Party. Although it is not a mass workers' party this, together with the other examples illustrate our flexible approach to tactics.

Traditional workers parties transformed

Following the Sixth World Congress the process of "bourgeoisification" of the former traditional workers' parties in western Europe has qualitatively transformed most of them. The leadership of these parties has swung even further to the right and fully embraced capitalism. This, combined with the collapse of the left reformists/centrists inside these parties, has meant that there is nothing to attract the most conscious working class and youth to these parties.

There is no prospect of a revival of a mass left reformist or centrist current within the social democracy in this period. Although in some countries small "left" fragments may break from these parties these will not represent a major left/centrist split. The degree this phenomena may develop will of course vary from country to country. In the British Labour Party there is no real left-wing. In France, from the PS there may be the prospect of a relatively larger split to the left. Even here the "left" in the PS is a shadow of its former self. Elements of these may play a role in the formation of new workers' parties that will emerge at a certain stage. This does not contradict the predominantly bourgeois character of the PS or Jospin's government.

The process of bourgeoisification has also taken place in the former colonial world amongst the workers' parties. In addition the radical bourgeois nationalist forces that enjoyed the allegiance of the working class

in some of these countries have dramatically swung to the right and adopted the programme of the “free market”. The ANC in South Africa and the Peronist (Partido Justicialista) in Argentina are two examples of populist bourgeois formations that have embraced the “neo-liberalism” of the past period. The same process has affected the guerrilla organisations of the 1970’s and 1980’s like the FSLN in Nicaragua and the FARC in Colombia. The latter has continued a military campaign but, like the FSLN and others, have openly embraced “social democracy” and the ideas of the free market.

In some countries the process of bourgeoisification may have been slightly slower than in others and may take a somewhat different form. In Brazil the process is still unfolding in the PT and has not yet been completed. In the light of the recent Presidential elections, it may result in a split from the PT to the right — with some similarities to the “neo-socialists” who split from the SFIO in France in 1933. The terminology of the party leadership may also have been more restrained in some countries than in others. However, the direction they are heading in is clear. Tony Blair has undoubtedly been in the vanguard of this process. He has the conscious objective of transforming the class character of the former workers’ parties. The objective he has is to roll back the wheel of history and change the traditional workers’ parties into liberal capitalist parties and thereby rob the working class of independent political representation. As the bourgeoisification of the former workers’ parties is completed in more countries it means that a similar task is posed to that which has existed in the USA, where only bourgeois parties exist and it is necessary to pose the need for an independent workers’ party. Although the process of bourgeoisification of the former traditional parties is being completed the more general idea of Blair (to rob the working class of independent political representation) will fail when it confronts the objective reality.

The British Labour Party was born because of the failure of the capitalist Liberal Party to

satisfy the needs of the strengthened working class that developed. This took place at the end of the last century as the curtain began to fall on British imperialism’s global supremacy. In the more recent history, in Greece, PASOK was built in the 1970s because of the failure of the Centre Union to satisfy the interests of a strengthened proletariat that also was looking for an alternative to Stalinism. The current intensification of capitalism’s global crisis is certain to ensure that none of the existing pro-capitalist parties is able to satisfy the interests of the working class and will pose the question of the need for the working class to establish its own independent political party. This process has already been seen in South Korea and other countries of the Asian region where the question of the need for a party to express the needs of the working class has emerged as an important issue.

‘Third Way’

The international forum of the “Centre-Left” which has been established linking up the Democratic Party of the USA is a reflection of how far the leaders of the former workers’ parties have gone in attempting to link themselves with capitalism. For Blair and some others this represents an attempt to break totally with the past and even move towards the break up of the Second International. The fact that Jospin and the French Socialist Party did not attend was more out of his concern to defend his own particular interests than out of any principled ideological opposition. The “left-wing” Jospin, outlining his version of Blair’s ‘Third Way’ has declared that: “We say yes to market economy but no to market society.”

The recent election victories of social democratic parties in Western Europe represents two processes. Firstly, because of the undermining of the basis of the traditional bourgeois parties, they are the most reliable instruments through which the capitalist class can rule at this conjuncture. Secondly, despite the pro-market programme of the social democracy, for the masses they signify (in a distorted way) a

left-ward protest against the “neo-liberal” policies that have been implemented during the 1990s.

The new social democratic governments in Europe are all regarded as “safe” by the ruling class and they have willingly embraced the programme of capitalism. In the past the ruling class also regarded the leaders of these parties as defenders of capitalism. However, the bourgeoisie feared that they could be forced, under the mass pressure of the working class, to take measures which threatened the capitalists. This is now less and less the case as the parties have become more and more bourgeoisified.

One of the most dramatic illustrations of this process is the Chilean Socialist Party. Under the Popular Unity government of Allende the party leadership was compelled to go much further than its leaders intended because of the pressure of the revolutionary aspirations of the working class and party rank and file. Today, without this pressure, its leaders sit in coalition with the Christian Democrats and support every reactionary step taken by the government. This year PSCh ministers even defended the killings and repression by the state forces that took place on demonstrations marking the 25th anniversary of the military coup in 1973.

In France also despite a certain “radical” phraseology, Jospin is regarded as a reliable defender of capitalism. His pledge to introduce a 35-hour week has been revealed for what it is — a cover to attack conditions and labour rights. Jospin, although avoiding the word “privatisation”, has in fact privatised more than the previous Juppé administration.

Amongst the decisive questions for Marxists when determining the class character of a party are: its programme; tradition and how it was formed; class character of the leadership and membership; and the attitude of the working class and the masses towards it.

The former traditional workers’ parties are now increasingly seen as simply part of the established society and no longer as parties that defend the interests of the working class and most exploited layers of society. The hostility by sections of workers towards these parties was reflected in Spain where striking miners in the Asturias attacked the offices of PSOE.

In the case of the British Labour Party the membership is now unrecognisable compared with what it was only a few years ago as workers have been replaced by various layers of the petty bourgeoisie and even some individual capitalists and financiers. The influence of the trades unions has been slashed and the financial basis of the party has become increasingly dependent on big business. Most importantly the possibility of the working class changing the party is cut off as every avenue has been blocked by a series of bureaucratic obstacles that have concentrated power and policy decisions into the hands of the parliamentary leadership.

In Japan the process of bourgeoisification of the former Socialist Party (initially re-named the Social Democratic Party) has taken a somewhat different route. After politically swinging to the right the SDP has followed a path of splits, fragmentation and then virtual disintegration of the party. The party voted to disband itself. This process ended in big sections of the SDP merging into the Democratic Party and a small section even joined the LDP.

‘Safe’ but not stable

These processes now mean that there is no prospect of a movement by the working class and youth to join these parties. The hostility towards these parties is set to increase in Europe because now in government they will become the instrument through which the attacks of the ruling class are carried out.

Although the ruling class regards the new governments as “safe” this does not mean

that they will be stable. The hopes that greeted Blair's election in Britain are beginning to turn into opposition, as the pro-capitalist programme of the new government becomes more apparent. This is not contradicted by the high support Blair is getting in the opinion polls. These reflect the fact that economic recession has not yet fully hit home. The total collapse and disarray of the Conservative Party means that it is not seen as a viable alternative. The same has also begun to take place in Jospin's France, especially after the protests by the unemployed. Schröder in Germany will be subject to the same development, especially with the onset of a recession in Europe.

The process of bourgeoisification of these parties does not mean that they will not be able to win electoral support. The elections in Britain, France and Germany and the victory of the social democratic formations were undoubtedly greeted with a great relief by the working class and big sections of the middle class. The vote was mainly fueled by the prospects of defeating the established parties of capitalism. This was particularly the case in Britain and Germany after a prolonged period of rule by the Conservative Party and the Christian Democratic Union/Christian Social Union. The CDU got its worst result since 1949 and the combined vote of the "Left" (SPD, Greens and PDS) was the highest ever. In France, after a relatively brief period of government by the traditional right-wing parties, Jospin's election was also a by-product of the mass movement that took place in 1995. Internationally there has been a pronounced tendency to vote against all governments in order to punish them.

The striking feature of the process that has developed is how quickly the mood has begun to turn to opposition to the governments in France and Britain. Any honeymoon enjoyed by the social democratic governments will be short lived. This reflects the programme of these governments and the increasingly changed attitude of workers towards these parties. In Greece, the PASOK government of Simitis

has seen a massive erosion in its support following savage cuts in public expenditure, labour reform laws and a massive privatisation programme that has provoked strikes of bank workers, a national strike of transport workers and protests by other others sections of the working class.

The consciousness of the masses usually lags behind the demands of the objective situation. A layer of older workers may still continue to harbour some illusions in these parties. This is based upon the memory of the history of reformism — in particular the period of reforms that were conceded after the Second World War. The reality of the new situation will be burned into the consciousness of the masses as the new governments are forced to attack the proletariat because of the economic crisis that is currently unfolding. This will not allow lasting reforms anything like those of the 1950s, 1960s and to an extent the 1970s to be implemented by these parties. Any concessions that they are forced to make will rapidly be taken away and accompanied by further cuts and attacks on living standards.

This does not mean that these parties will simply disappear. They can maintain an electoral basis for a period, especially given the absence of viable alternatives being formed in the short to medium term. This was illustrated in Spain where, despite losing the general election, PSOE was able to maintain an important electoral base mainly due to the hatred of the right-wing PP and its association with the Franco period in the eyes of many Spanish workers and youth. The Izquierda Unida, led by the Anquita of the PCE, did not put forward a left alternative to PSOE and failed to win the support that potentially existed for it. Electoral gains for 'Left' parties

However, the recent general election in Sweden illustrated how even the electoral support for the Social Democracy can be rapidly eroded as its pro-capitalist programme is exposed. The vote for the Social Democracy was the lowest received by the party since 1922!

The dramatic increase in the vote of the Left Party (former Communists) to 12% illustrates the rejection of the openly capitalist programme of the Social Democracy. Big sections of blue collar workers, the unemployed and youth voted for the Left Party because they perceived it as representing something to the left of the Social Democracy. Amongst the unemployed the Left Party won 28.3% of the vote compared with 33% for the Social Democrats. Amongst first time voters 19% voted for the Left Party and 22.4% for the Social Democrats.

This took place despite the Left Party having moved to the right and having supported the cuts that have been carried through by local councils. The perception of the party amongst the mass is that it is to the left of the social democracy, despite the programme it has defended and the cuts it has carried through.

A similar phenomena was also seen in the German election (although to a lesser extent than in Sweden) in relation to the PDS which despite its role at local level still managed to increase its share of the vote in eastern Germany. For the first time it obtained over 5% of the national vote and increased its support in the west by 100,000 votes. However, this was significant and has boosted the PDS so that it could be seen more as an all-German party. In the semi-colonial world the Chilean Communist Party also increased its electoral support in elections during 1997.

The votes for both these former Stalinist parties by a significant minority should be distinguished from the electoral swings to the social democracy in Britain, France and Germany. Those who voted for the former CPs are looking for a more "left-wing" or socialist alternative to the right-wing policies of the social democracy. In this sense they reflected in a distorted way a higher level of political consciousness. Despite the swing to the right in policy by the Japanese Communist Party, the dramatic increase in its vote to more than 14% also reflected an element of this. However, the programme, role and methods of these parties will, in the

main, prevent them from attracting significant layers of workers and youth into their ranks.

In France, this element of a protest vote to the "left" of the Socialist Parties has partially been reflected in a different way. The vote of the PCF (French Communist Party) has generally continued to decline in part because of a rejection of its association with Stalinism and also because of the role it has played in France i.e. during its period in government under Mitterrand, in the mass movement and now in its participation in Jospin's government. The PCF remains an important force because of its influence in industry. However, the left protest vote against the PS has mainly gone to Lutte Ouvrière and to a lesser extent the LCR. (The LO and LCR because of their policy and wrong methods will not be able to fully capitalise on this increased electoral support. The sectarian ideas and methods of LO was illustrated by its refusal to take an initiative after the success of their candidate in the last Presidential elections. The wrong methods and programme of the LCR are reflected in a more opportunistic direction).

The role of the PCF leaders has resulted in the development of opposition groupings amongst the rank and file. This reflects the more 'open' situation that has developed in most of the Communist Parties since the collapse of Stalinism. In Portugal a similar development has also taken place because of the role of the CP in carrying through cuts at local level where it has controlled the local councils. This provoked strikes against the councils, often with the active participation of rank-and-file CP members. The CP subsequently lost control of some local councils around Lisbon in 1997. The opposition currents often have a proletarian make-up. Where relevant we should undertake joint work and a certain political orientation towards them. However, they are frequently made up of older workers who still have an allegiance to some of the ideas and methods of Stalinism making it difficult to recruit them to the CWI.

Where ex-Stalinist parties like the PDS and VP (Left Party, Sweden) do win a significant

degree of electoral support it may be necessary for our sections to undertake a certain political orientation towards them. This political orientation would mainly be required to reach those who had voted for such parties rather than to win the existing members. We must follow the development of these parties closely and equip our own comrades to take full political advantage. The support for these parties is more in the nature of a protest on the electoral plane, which hasn't translated into any growth of membership, roots in the working class etc. It is a very fragile base, entirely because of the political vacuum in society. These parties will rapidly disillusion those who voted for them, especially as they are increasingly drawn into local and even national government coalitions etc. We approach these parties for "united front" type initiatives in the anti-racist work, for example. At the same time we engage in implacable criticism of their political representatives, attempt to draw them into debates and politically expose them. We adopt a friendly attitude to those who voted for them, patiently but clearly explaining our criticisms of these parties.

New Left parties unstable

At the last World Congress the Socialist Left Party in Norway and the then recent "left" split from the Labour Party in New Zealand, the New Labour Party, and other parties in other countries, were featured during the discussion. The resolution, 'The traditional workers' parties' stated, "Whilst such left splits are likely to be posed as a central part of our perspectives in many countries, in others they can be delayed or may not develop for various and diverse factors". It also pointed to the limited nature of the programme put forward by the left splits that had taken place.

Since the last world congress an important feature in the situation has been the incapacity of the new formations that have been established in some countries to consolidate a stable and firm basis. Most, although initially opposing cuts in welfare spending and "neo-liberalism", did not

assume a clearly defined left reformist or centrist character. They failed to oppose capitalism and defend the ideas of socialism and rapidly also moved towards the right.

This was the case with the Democratic Social Movement (DIKKI) in Greece that split from PASOK in Greece but adopted a mildly "left" policy that was heavily coated with Greek nationalism. This formation failed to develop significantly or gain any major base. In New Zealand the New Labour Party (NLP), after eventually making some electoral gains, developed in a rightward direction. It has recently re-established some relations and a pact with the Labour Party from which it originally split. The Socialist Left Party in Norway quickly moved in a rightward direction and the support it was winning evaporated from having 20% support in the opinion polls to 5.9% in the election that took place in 1997.

The reason that these formations have developed in this way was because of developments in the international economic and political situation. Most importantly is the inability by national governments to withstand the enormous domination of the world market. The abandonment of the reformist measures of the Mitterrand government in 1981/2 were an anticipation of what was to follow later internationally. The internationalisation of the capitalist world economy made it impossible to adopt an independent "national road" and oppose the "neo-liberal" programme that has been implemented by all governments during the last decade. This was the situation during the recent economic conjuncture in which the programme of "neo-liberalism" was the policy that was applied internationally by capitalism and its representatives. In this period only the adoption of a revolutionary and internationalist socialist programme could offer a viable alternative to capitalism and "neo-liberalism". The leaders of the new formations were not prepared to embrace the alternative of Marxism.

In the former colonial world the radical bourgeois nationalist formations fell into line with this trend and opted for the adoption

of a “free and open market” and opposed state intervention. In Mexico, even the PRD, a radical bourgeois party established by Cardenas, initially won massive support and aroused high expectations. Although it has maintained electoral support it has also gone back to the right and the tremendously high illusions in it that existed have substantially declined. Its leadership is dominated by former leaders of the PRI and it has now supported the idea of a governmental pact with the PRI and the right-wing PAN to deal with the developing economic crisis.

The onset of the current economic crisis will partially check the increased globalisation of the economy and even reverse the recent trends that have taken place in this direction. The left-reformist/reformist leaders and others are raising “neo-Keynesian” ideas of capital control and other means of state intervention. The capitalists themselves will resort to these and other measures in order to try and protect their interests during the rapidly developing crisis and new conjuncture in the world economy. These processes will be one factor that will again lead to the re-emergence of new mass reformist currents and parties.

PRC in crisis

In Europe the exception to the lack of any left-wing or socialist alternative appeared to be the PRC in Italy. The PRC was (and probably still is) the most left-wing of the new parties. This party grew and developed an important basis. By the end of 1997 it had a registered membership of 130,000. It contained within it important elements of centrism as well as Left-Reformism. The youth within this party formed an important basis for the most left-wing of the tendencies within it. However, the party has now entered into a crisis and its future is far from certain.

The absence of a Marxist programme and a clear decisive leadership has meant that the party has been unable to face up to the tasks that confronted it in Italy. The PRC was left with the worst of all possible worlds when, firstly, it withdrew support from the

Prodi government without preparing its own members and supporters. Lacking a clear alternative, under intensive pressure from the PDS and trade union bureaucracy that had mobilised important sections of workers against it, the PRC leadership then reversed its decision, within twenty four hours, and returned to prop up the Prodi government. It subsequently voted for the biggest public expenditure cuts that have been implemented in Italy since World War II. The IEC resolution ‘The Current Situation and Tasks for the CWI’ (adopted in November 1996) warned that if the PRC “...fails to distance itself from the policies of the Prodi government it could begin to see its base eroded”.

A section of the PRC apparatus led by Cossuta is now clearly opposed to Bertinotti and is intending to remain with the Prodi government. This opens the prospect of split in the party and the possibility of Cossuta and his supporters returning to the PDS. An important feature in the development of the PRC has been the relatively low level of activists in the party. According to one report out of 130,000 party members only 20–30,000 are active. Of these 5,000 hold either regional or local government positions!

These developments in the PRC are important because they illustrate one feature that new parties of the working class are likely to have when they are eventually established. They will tend to be less stable, more transitional and have a more precarious existence than the former workers’ parties. It will therefore be a mistake to assume that they will enjoy the relatively secure and stable basis of the old workers’ parties in the post Second World War period. The new parties will be established in a period of sharp economic and social turmoil. The former workers’ parties maintained an extended lease of life for two main reasons, apart from their historical roots amongst the working class.

Perspectives for new workers’ parties

Firstly, the prolonged period of capitalist boom after the Second World War allowed a lengthy period of reforms to be conceded by the ruling class in the advanced capitalist countries, especially western Europe. Secondly, they appeared to offer an alternative to the totalitarian regimes of Stalinism to the working class.

The decade of the 1990s has shown that the formation of new workers' parties will be a complicated and quite protracted process. Many of our sections have got a good response amongst a layer of workers for the idea of forming a new party of the working class. This was the case in Belgium during the struggle of the steel workers at the Forges du Clabegc and during the 'white movement' in 1996. The masses were disgusted at the corruption of the traditional parties and the role they have played. The question of a new party arose during a specific struggle. Numerous "parties" were in fact launched although none of them were workers' parties and were launched on specific social issues. Because of a lack of programme and leadership none of them developed.

However, although a sympathetic response to the idea of a new party illustrates the loss of a solid base by the traditional parties and a certain development in consciousness, a greater leap in consciousness is required by the most class-conscious workers before they take the necessary steps to actually build such a party. Before reaching this conclusion workers and youth will need to pass through further experience of both industrial and political struggles.

The formation of new broad workers' parties, even on a reformist basis or in some countries without even initially adopting the idea of socialism, would represent a step forward. Such a development would represent the working class establishing its own independent political organisation. This provides an umbrella under which the most conscious workers can engage in political struggle. With the audacious intervention of revolutionary Marxists it can assist in raising the political consciousness and confidence of the proletariat.

Although the onset of a deep recession and crisis can speed up the process towards the formation of new workers' parties it is still likely to be a more protracted process in most countries. The issue can develop in the consciousness of important sections of the working class but it still can initially be delayed for subjective reasons. This has been illustrated in South Korea where the question has featured in the KCTU as an important issue during the recent upheavals. However, the union leadership has thus far derailed the formation of a combative independent party of the working class. A ferocious struggle is taking place on the issue but even the new militant leadership seems to have accepted the vague concept of a "people's" movement.

The steps towards the formation of new broad parties of the working class will develop more rapidly in some countries than in others. Some forces from the CPs in some countries may play an important part in the process. Initially they can also hinder the formation of a new party. In general this development will still tend to be of a more protracted nature because of subjective weaknesses and obstacles.

The subjective weaknesses relate both to the existing consciousness of workers and to the role played by Stalinists, ex-Stalinists and some trade union leaders. In Britain the attempts to form a new broader workers' party were effectively blocked by the role of the Socialist Labour Party (SLP) and Scargill's Stalinist methods.

In Indonesia the PRD is an important force with a self sacrificing membership. It still needs to build a mass membership, which if it fails to do could result in other formations arising during the revolution. The leadership of the PRD has also embraced ideas such as "the two stage theory" which can derail the Indonesian revolution. The CWI needs to argue for the party to adopt a Marxist alternative.

Role of the CWI in developing new workers' parties

Where appropriate we should put forward the demand for the formation of a new workers' party. We should propagate and fight for this demand in those countries where it is relevant. Under the new Social Democratic governments we can also begin to raise the question of the trade unions withdrawing financial and political support for the social democracy in countries where this is relevant. At the right moment it is correct to raise the idea of the trade unions giving financial support to other socialist candidates in elections and other struggles (including our own).

When raising this demand we must ensure that we do not reduce our own section/party to merely campaigning for the establishment of a new workers' party. In some countries through this demand we can reach a layer of workers and youth. Our German section (SAV) was able to do this during the recent general election by featuring this demand and linking it to the need to join our party and support our programme and ideas.

We must guard against the risk of neglecting the building of our own organisation and reducing our forces to a campaigning body for a new workers' party. We cannot build and recruit on a solid basis without convincing workers and youth of our general programme and ideas as well as our intervention in the class struggle.

When the opportunity does present itself and where the forces exist we should go further than simply raising the demand for a new workers' party in a propaganda fashion. Our sections should be prepared to take initiatives and propose concrete steps to participate in launching a broader party of the working class. The British section (SP) attempted this in 1995. An opportunity arose when Scargill was launching the SLP. We approached the SLP and proposed concrete steps to launch a broader umbrella formation. The opportunity that existed to establish a substantial party was lost because of the sectarianism of Scargill and the SLP.

In Greece at the end of 1995 our comrades had numerous discussions with Tsavolas, a "left" PASOK MP who prepared the split from PASOK and formed DIKKI. We tried to convince him of the need to launch a new workers' party with socialist ideas. Unfortunately he restricted himself to trying to construct a "movement" rather than an organised force of the most advanced workers and embraced a nationalistic programme. As a result of his role this opportunity was also lost at that time.

The World Congress stresses to all sections that when such an opportunity arises and the forces exist we should seize it in an audacious but correct fashion.

Any proposal or initiative that our sections take to establish a broad workers' party must also ensure that we fight to win support for our own independent programme and recruit new members of our section/party. It will only be possible to do this effectively if we ensure that we maintain our own clearly distinct and coherent party and structure.

Many tactical turns will be necessary as mass left reformist and centrist currents develop. It will not be possible for us to intervene in them effectively if we only have a loose political cohesion and organisational structure. It will be vital for us to have the necessary political cohesion and clarity and a well organised structure if we are to win the best workers and youth involved in these formations to genuine Marxist ideas and methods. An important aspect of winning such forces will be the question of the need for a revolutionary international.

Building CWI forces

At this conjuncture in the majority of countries our sections are not yet confronted with this development. Nevertheless, we need to be alert to the prospect and possibilities of new workers' formations being established, and the CWI and its sections reject any idea of passively waiting on such developments. On the other hand it is not correct for us to conduct a

fruitless search for small worn out forces and individuals thinking that they will constitute the basis for a new workers' party. The situation that is opening up will enable us to building substantial revolutionary formations. In some countries at national level these can become small mass parties. In others, initially we will be able to achieve this at a regional and local level. The development of our party (Socialist Party) in the south of Ireland and the election of a member of parliament are an indication of how we are already strengthening our forces there. This can be repeated in other countries.

The main task we have is to intervene and undertake initiatives to reach fresh layers of workers and youth independently as an open organisation. We need to intervene in the struggles of the masses with a view to recruiting the fresh generation of workers and youth. Through this emphasis we can win the most combative and radicalised sections and introduce them to revolutionary socialist and Marxist ideas.

Initially many of those we reach will be attracted to us by our interventions in the class struggle and the initiatives we take amongst the workers and the youth. These can begin on very basic questions. The most politically aware and combative layer we must try and recruit and then systematically introduce them to our programme and the nature of national parties/sections and the international. The recent success of our Swedish section (RS) is an indication of what we can achieve elsewhere in the near future. This emphasis on building our own independent forces does not mean that we adopt a sectarian approach.

'United Front' methods

Most of our sections have adopted 'united front' methods of work with other groups in order to try and reach a broader layer. This has applied to struggles of workers and youth, in the trade unions and in our revolutionary electoral work. The Sri Lanka section (USP) is currently participating in a left-wing electoral block, the New Left Front.

Our Swedish section participated for a short time in a block, the Justice List. When doing this work we have maintained our own independent political and organisational profile and publications.

The flexibility of our tactics has been shown in the work of our Nigerian comrades (DSM). Our work in the National Conscience Party (NCP) has involved elements of both a united front character and a certain aspect of entrism. After the recent upheavals it has been possible for us to launch a publicly open organisation and continue to work in and around the NCP. In the past, in some countries of the former colonial world we have conducted work in and around radical bourgeois formations that have had an important basis amongst the working class and other exploited layers.

For a period our sections conducted work in and around the BNP in Sri Lanka, the PPP in Pakistan and others. Because of the changed attitude of the masses towards these organisations and the swing to the right that has taken place in them, this tactic has not applied in recent years. However, the emergence of new radical bourgeois formations in some countries of the former colonial world will mean we should be prepared, where necessary, to work in and around them. If we had forces in Mexico it may have been correct for them to orientate in/around the radical bourgeois PRD when it was launched at the end of the 1980's. Although the majority of our sections are undertaking open, independent work, this does not prevent us from joining and working within parties when the situation justifies it. The re-joining of our Brazilian section into the PT in the recent period is an indication of this. This may be only a short term situation. However, if the right-wing do split from the PT it may develop for a period of time, under the impact the deep social and economic crisis that is taking place. Our Brazilian section, in such a situation, may need to continue to work in the PT.

The application of the method of the united front has been beneficial to our work in some countries. It has enabled us to develop

our influence, build our own forces and take the struggle forward. At the same time the World Congress stresses that when applying 'united front' methods we must ensure that we maintain a correct balance. In undertaking this work we must ensure that we do not lose our own independent programme or party profile.

'United front' methods will inevitably mean conducting a joint struggle with other forces on specific issues and in support of concrete slogans. It is important that we apply the transitional method when taking our ideas to the new generation of workers and youth during this activity. We must also ensure that when participating in 'united front' methods of work we do not lower our own political and organisational banner. We must maintain our own independent publications explaining our programme and the need to join our own organisation. The old maxim of 'march separately but strike together' must continue to be applied.

The twin dangers of sectarianism and opportunism need to be guarded against. We must combat any tendency towards a sectarian attitude towards the working class and the youth that may develop in our international. However, sectarianism should not be mistaken for adopting a principled stand to defend our programme and build our organisation in opposition to other political groups who are presenting a wrong programme, analysis and method of work which confuses and disorientates the proletariat.

It is important that we maintain a sense of proportion when applying the method of the united front. In the main the activity some sections have participated in has not been the application of a classical united front which related to the mass organisations of the working class. It is important that when sections discuss these type of initiatives we seriously consider what investment in time and resources we put into them and what benefits we are going to get out of them. Formal alliances with other political groups are inevitably temporary and may not be long lasting.

Trade unions

This Congress emphasises to all sections the importance of our work in the work places and the trade unions. We face an entirely new situation even in relation to the trade unions due to: (1) a parallel process of bourgeoisification of the union tops; (2) a crisis of falling membership; (3) a failure to defend old positions in the face of 'globalisation', neo-liberal attacks, mass unemployment etc. This is the point of departure for the industrial work of the CWI in the coming period.

While there are important differences in our characterisation of the trade unions, as distinct from the bourgeoisified ex-workers' parties, primarily that they are still based in the working class, it is nonetheless clear that this process has affected the unions, albeit to varying degrees in different countries. This has transformed the conditions in which Marxists and other worker militants are forced to work, raising new political and tactical problems

The tendency for the trade union apparatus to become integrated with the 'market' has gone further than in the past. This is manifested in numerous ways: big union investments in stock markets; massive growth of bureaucracy and privileges, seats on company boards, pension funds etc and even bigger retreats in relation to anti-strike legislation, new versions of social contracts etc.

During the 1990s the officialdom have been a huge break on workers' resistance, have collaborated with and sponsored privatisations, redundancies etc and acted to hold down wage levels. The unions have acted as an important pillar for the bosses' EMU process, this is especially clear in Italy. All this has had a big effect on consciousness. While the idea of trade unionism — as an ideal — is popular, workers generally have less allegiance to their unions than in the past and, in particular, the authority of the union leaders is, with some exceptions, on the same low

level as for the “politicians”. Especially in Europe, dominated by social democratic governments, which we characterised as bourgeois parties, is of special interest.

This does not mean that we ‘write off’ the existing union organisations, even where the character of a union has changed. We must avoid a sectarian and ultra-left attitude towards the official trade union structures. It is necessary to combine work at the base with the building of opposition currents to the trade union bureaucracy. Even if the intensified pressure from the bosses and the process of bourgeoisification of the trade union officials penetrate down to the lowest levels; they cannot eradicate an elemental class-consciousness in and around the local unions closest to the membership. Marxism, especially in this period must demonstrate great flexibility in its approach and tactics. Lenin argued that communists must be prepared to work in the most reactionary trade unions — the key question is consciousness, and where the workers can be reached. The Bolsheviks even worked in a Black Hundreds-led union in order to win the workers involved.

The only factor that can arrest and, under certain conditions, reverse the process of ever deeper integration (with capitalism) is mass struggle — and this of course is our perspective. However, this does not settle the question in advance of in which direction the union apparatuses, subjected to the blows of a mass movement, will be pushed. The character of the trade union structures, opportunities for rank and file influence, traditions of opposition groupings, are important factors in determining this. In some cases the existing structures can be ‘rejuvenated’ as partially occurred within the US Teamsters. In others the perspective will be one of splits or new formations, small examples of which we have seen in Australia, South Africa, and most clearly in South Korea. Splits will be a stronger feature than previously the case. Even where new formations emerge, however, these too will arrive at an impasse without a political re-orientation.

Our tactics will depend on the concrete situation: What is the best means to take the struggle forward? In most cases our intervention will involve a combination of a “hybrid” involving parallel official and new, unofficial structures.

Two key tasks

Marxism is faced with two key tasks in the new period that began with the collapse of the former Stalinist regimes. Firstly, to face up to the new features present in the situation and draw the necessary conclusions for the tasks of revolutionary socialists. One crucial task in this period is to assist in the process of rebuilding the idea of socialism as an alternative to capitalism. It is important for us today to explain the reasons for the emergence of Stalinism and the collapse of the Stalinist system.

Secondly, to defend the method and fundamental ideas of Marxism from the ideological offensive that has been launched against them. A crucial aspect of this is the need to educate and train a new generation of cadres and members in the political and organisational methods of Marxism. This does not mean repeating Marxist ideas as dogmatic formulae but of applying the Marxist method to the new world situation.

The decade of the 1990’s has been marked by a period of ideological confusion and collapse on the left, including some of the revolutionary left. The CWI has withstood this pressure far more effectively than other organisations. However, in this period a danger exists of diluting the programme of Marxism in order to find a short cut and to reach a general accommodation with other forces/individuals on the socialist left. This process has been re-enforced in the recent period because of the absence of a cohesive left-reformist current in many countries. This can lead to a blunting in the presentation of our programme and ideas if we do not guard against it. Powerful centrist and left-reformist currents and parties will develop in the future. Even when we are in a minority Marxists have a

responsibility to explain to workers why our programme is necessary. In periods of ideological confusion it is even more important that we patiently explain to workers our analysis and why our programme is necessary.

If our cadres are not steeled in our programme and how to defend it we will pay a heavy price in the next period as reformist and centrist ideas are expressed in a more formulated way. The ideas of popular frontism and the stages theory that have emerged again during the Indonesian revolution are an indication of the need for us to sharpen the understanding of our sections on all aspects of our programme and ideas.

The 7th World Congress of the CWI recognises that we must avoid the twin dangers of opportunism and sectarianism. It is necessary that we apply the maximum flexibility when developing our tactics. At the same time it is necessary to combat any attempt to water down our programme and to accept an opportunistic adaptation.

Lenin and Trotsky fought to differentiate themselves politically, programmatically and organisationally from left-reformism and centrism. As the experience of the POUM in Spain demonstrated, at critical moments in the class struggle the most fatal role can be played by centrism and left-centrism.

The 7th World Congress instructs the IEC/IS to review these aspects of the work and to ensure that the experience of each section is fully discussed throughout the CWI. This will strengthen the work and experience of all sections and help ensure that we are fully prepared to face up to the tasks that we have at the present time.

4/ Rebuilding the Working Class Movement & Forging a Revolutionary Party Today Some points on the dual task and other issues in the debate in Ireland and internationally for the Special Conference September 2019, Kevin McLoughlin

Recovering from the crisis

As this Special Conference approaches, it is exactly a year since the dispute emerged in Ireland and Internationally. The IS adopted an unpolitical and uncomradely approach to the NEC Majority comrades and the party in Ireland, rooted in a pre-existing opposition to our work which they had harboured for a period of years.

When the broader membership of the IEC heard all the issues before and during the IEC meeting last November, a majority disagreed with the political approach and methods of the IS, and this resulted in the unprecedented development of the IS losing a crucial vote at the end of the IEC -- 24 votes to 21. However, it had been clear throughout the IEC that the IS was facing the prospect of not having the support of the IEC, and this was the context in which they organised an international faction in the CWI. The IS continued the polarising approach ever since in the nature of the material they produced, their collapsing of the Congress Organising Committee and their general approach.

IR leaving the International Faction in March simply copper-fastened the trend that the majority in the CWI were moving into opposition to the politics and approach of the IS Majority and becoming supportive of the Coordination, which was an ad hoc group of IEC comrades from many sections. The Coordination, which came into being at the IEC in response to the politically polarising and damaging approach of the IS, has tried to hold together as much of the CWI as possible. In very difficult circumstances it has done a remarkable job, maintaining nearly 30 of the sections and a presence on all five continents.

The refusal of the IS to abide by the decisions of the IEC in November, including their refusal of the democratic petition, signed by an absolute majority of the IEC and so satisfying all the requirements of the CWI Statutes, for the convening of an IEC meeting in August was a turning point.

Having ripped up the democracy of the CWI, they then, with the sponsorship of the Socialist Party in E/W, convened an International Conference which had no standing in the CWI and declared that the International had been reconstituted, with the majority of members and sections excluded. This means that they split from the CWI. Correctly then the IEC Majority convened a legitimate meeting of the IEC of the CWI in August in Ghent, and among other various decisions that IEC took, it voted to de-select the IS, and elected a 19 member Provisional Committee to operate until a World Congress of the CWI in Belgium from 26 to 31 January 2020.

Before and since, the Provisional Committee and the CWI has produced some excellent political material and co-ordinated important international actions, particularly relating to the environment and the Global Climate Strike. While we are mindful of the damaging effects of the crisis in the CWI, there is a very clear majority of its forces committed to learning all the lessons from the crisis and who are rededicating themselves to the historic task of building a mass revolutionary Marxist international. This means that we can go into the new decade with optimism and a strong perspective.

The dispute in Ireland

Recent documents from the TTPF and the Militant Group both mention the importance of the Dual Task, both in general and as an aspect in the dispute -- these were The Dual Task Today (TTPF) and The Party at the Crossroads (MG).

We are glad that this question has come out more explicitly. The NEC Majority has extensively dealt with this in explaining the recent work of the party in the South. Now

we have an opportunity to view the approach of comrades, not only in relation to rebuilding the broad movements of the working class, but also the approach to building a revolutionary party.

The NEC Majority feels that both documents indicate an overly broad focus in the sense of an imbalance towards the broad task and point away from building a cadre revolutionary party. We feel that this is an established trend which the TTPF indicated in their document on women, on the elections and the one mentioned above. In terms of the MG, much less so, but the Crossroads document is in reality the first lengthy contribution from the comrades.

Militant Group: What is the role of Socialist Party comrades in the trade unions?

In Crossroads, the comrades give great emphasis to the pioneering work undertaken in the unions in the North in extremely difficult circumstances. Of course this is the legacy of the whole organisation, and something we all are proud of and stand over.

However, the text seems to point towards a separation in the work of the Party politically in the second paragraph when it talks of the accumulated political capital of the past being placed at risk, and that linked to the points in the ninth paragraph of Part 1, when it states that the “experienced trade union core of the party” is being put at risk.

What's been said isn't clear on a number of levels. Firstly, why and who is putting at risk the capital of the Party? More particularly, does this mean that trade union positions, and perhaps in particular, positions in NIPSA, constitute the accumulated political capital rather than the ideas, programme, methods and collective experience of the Party itself, constituting our capital? Is this union position being elevated to be on a par with the Party itself, as opposed to being an important element within the Party? If what is meant is the Party etc as above, then again the question is posed: Who or what is

threatening or putting the Party at risk? This is not at all clear from the document.

In the introduction, the document quotes the MG Declaration from July in regard to the June NC and says that “The historically important work of the Party in the trade union movement in the North was criticised in a series of unbalanced attacks.” This is the second time the MG has made this accusation and unfortunately it is a major misrepresentation of the content and tone of the discussion at the June NC. On foot of the letter that some trade union comrades in the North had written in May, there was discussion on this and some discussion relating to some of the comrades who signed the letter. This included points regarding how active and involved the comrades were.

However, these points were raised in a balanced way and in the context of the necessity of having more discussion among all the comrades.

The Crossroads document refers to this as an attack on the comrades and an undermining of the rights of comrades. However, in the introduction, the document itself says, “Militant Group members are agreed that we must address our own flaws, in particular seeking to overcome a certain disconnect from the internal life of the Party.” That the document itself confirms that there is an issue regarding activity and connection with the Party of some of the comrades in the MG completely legitimises and vindicates what were balanced points raised by trade union comrades at the NC and undermines the narrative that comrades have been unfairly attacked.

Diminishing the responsibilities of revolutionaries?

As mentioned we agree with much of what has been written regarding the history of our trade union work. However, we don't agree with the conclusions drawn in the paragraph that spans page 6 and 7, starting with, “It is that vital combination...”

Included in this paragraph is, "The Party is a collective enterprise. Each member should strive to be a politically confident Marxist and to engage with working class people through activity in the wider movement. It is the case however that not every comrade is necessarily, or even usually, this rounded-out combination in themselves. Rather there is a partial division of labour in the Party, with some comrades more focused on party work, and some on trade union work or other arenas of activity. Personal circumstances are a not insignificant factor: family commitments, work pressures, age, health and geographical location restrict the ability of many comrades to engage fully in the internal life of the Party."

While mentioning the importance of a collective approach, in reality this quote points more towards a potential federal relationship between different areas of work, again a separation, rather than the party and its democratic structures having an overarching relationship, connection and input into all aspects of the work.

In a sense the issue is also raised of what is a member of a revolutionary party, something that has some historic significance for Marxists. The above paragraph also raises the point of what constitutes a cadre and what is our approach to building a cadre in the revolutionary party, something which we have always said is absolutely crucial. The importance of comrades developing themselves as rounded-out Marxists is mentioned, but then is immediately undermined by, "It is the case however that not every comrade is necessarily, or even usually, this rounded-out combination in themselves."

This is not insignificant. There is a potential acceptance here that it's ok, for example, that comrades do not strive to develop themselves politically as a rounded-out cadre. Of course there will be some situations and times when comrades are not able to play the role they would like, but in general it is crucial that the dominant attitude within the party, and of every

comrade is to consciously try each week, each month to development themselves, their role and be active in the party.

Of course comrades should cooperate and help one another as is also implied in the text, but in the past we often described a cadre in terms of a comrade who if they were on their own, would have the capability, confidence, political level and experience to initiate work and build the party. We aren't trying to build "Jacks of all trades", but certainly not "Jacks of one trade" either. There is a danger that such a sentiment or approach won't achieve the goal stated earlier, of overcoming a certain disconnect to the party, but instead might reinforce such a disconnect.

Four comrades wrote a document in the debate entitled, "What we are building, why and how?". And its useful in this context to give the quote the comrades used in the document from a Party pack from 2016 about cadre:

"A cadre, meaning 'frame' in French, is a word for a dedicated member of the organisation who represents a basis through which the ideas, programme and methods of the Socialist Party are transmitted and built upon. A rounded-out cadre of the organisation needs to have:

X a knowledge of the ideas of Marxism, and an ability to apply them

X an intimate understanding of the methods and programme of the Socialist Party & CWI, giving them the tools to develop perspectives for the class struggle, develop an analysis and understanding of events unfolding in society, as a central guide to political action

X an important measure of the role of a cadre is their political input and ability to develop the analysis, perspectives and tactics of the organisation through their input into collective discussion; as well as their ability to act independently, in tandem with the overall goals and approach of the organisation as a whole

X in this way, a cadre is a leader and should be striving to represent the best traditions of socialism and Marxism at all times – self-sacrificing, tenacious and political to the core

X cadres are first and foremost, party builders – cadres use politics to recruit, consolidate and build more cadre”

Notwithstanding these issues and questions, the NEC Majority comrades look forward to having a constructive exchange with the MG and all trade union comrades regarding all aspects of the work. The importance of this has been raised and agreed at the NC, and the NEC plans to publish a discussion document to assist this in the next days.

Key issues emerging in the debate - perspectives and orientation

A broad orientation has been apparent in the political position of the TTPF. It was striking in the document the comrades produced in the wake of the Local and European elections, but also in The Dual Task Today document. More on this later. This document repeats numerous points of criticism that the NEC Majority has already answered, and it isn't feasible or helpful for us to just keep repeating all the answers again. So we will first focus on the issue of the Dual Task and what it reveals.

The Dual Task is described as contributing to the rebuilding of the broader workers' movements and organisation on the one hand, and building the revolutionary party, on the other.

The TTPF comrades say the NEC Majority only pay lip-service to the Dual Task, and that we have rejected it in practice, implying that we are on a sectarian turn. In addition they say we view the two elements of the Dual Task as almost completely separate and inherently counter-posed. However, in their own paragraphs 23 and 25 they list a whole series of work over the last years, led by comrades from the NEC Majority, which

they say were a contribution to this broader task!

Mass Work and Party-Building

None of these accusations are accurate or bear any relation to the actual work of the party over the last number of years. It is similar to the accusation that the comrades made verbally that we have an antipathy to mass work, and in writing where they contend that our Setting the Record Straight Part 2 document rails against mass work. Again we encourage comrades to read that document where it can be seen that the NEC Majority is in favour of taking account of the conditions and striking a correct balance between mass and public work, and building the Party. Unfortunately the TTPF don't seem to favour such a balance and are pointing towards the broad tasks and away from the revolutionary party.

The TTPF say that party building has not been integrated into mass work and vice versa. Then their narrative is that when we have to do mass work, that the approach to party building is blown off course because it's hasn't been integrated or factored in. Therefore the reason we haven't grown significantly from the mass work in recent years is our mistaken approach.

Of course no one would say that all areas of work are integrated perfectly. There are always some issues and room for improvement. However, far from having a “dualistic” approach as the TTPF assert, the Party has agreed and pushed an integrated approach regarding developing new activists in the mass work and has tried to recruit the best of these into the Party.

It has been discussed countless times that when people are stepping into activity and becoming politicised/radicalised, that we don't place a Chinese Wall between their involvement in the likes of CAHWT, the AAA or Solidarity and joining the Party. As indicated, we had a conscious policy of trying to develop activists and to recruit when CAWHT was being built, when the AAA was launched in late 2013, during the

election campaigns in 2014 and 2016, to the We Won't Pay campaign, when Solidarity was launched in late 2016 and in the run in and after the Jobstown trial.

On these occasions our approach was also to see if within these broader names we could identify Party contacts. Could this party recruitment work have been improved? Of course. But we did recruit some very important new comrades to the Party from these broader layers. The notion that we had a conscious policy not to recruit from this work and instead relied on separate "propaganda" campaigns to try to build is a fabrication.

This is being put forward now in the hope that perhaps some newer comrades who don't know what happened might accept that the lack of significant recruitment from the mass work was primarily because of subjective weaknesses. Then the TTPF will argue that with a different approach now we could get recruits from the mass work and in this way the TTPF would justify maintaining the mass work at very high levels that operated.

Consciousness, the broader movement and the Revolutionary party

The reason we did not recruit more significantly from the mass work of the last years was not primarily subjective. It was a reflection of the low and confused consciousness of the layers involved in the community based campaigning and the hesitancy of getting active at this point. Unfortunate features, still in the situation.

The position of Trotsky that the comrades mention in paragraph 20 of their Dual Task document is illustrative. Explaining why he reversed his position in the 1930s regarding building a Labor Party in the US, the comrades say: "they (Trotsky etc) had hoped that the development of the revolutionary party would be more rapid than it turned out". One has to presume a similar disappointment for the comrades is a factor for them in elevating the mass work and in particular raising as central the

importance now of building of a broad left workers' party.

Having also mentioned the theoretical logic behind why Ted Grant advocated longer term entrism, of the situation today the comrades say in paragraph 15 that:

"For the mass of workers, the most likely route into political activity would still be the path of least resistance, including joining or building reformist and centrist parties, rather than directly joining a revolutionary party."

It's important to note that it is a constant feature that the TTP comrades are overwhelmingly focused on the mass or the semi layers, i.e. the consciousness of the broad layers.

After the disappointment that a significant new broad left didn't emerge post water charges and Jobstown, or something with a base moving in that direction, it seems the TTPF comrades are looking for a model to point a way forward as to how a new left movement and how mass consciousness will develop.

The comrades draw more conclusions in paragraphs 29 and 30, respectively:

"At the broadest level, our party building work can only go so far in the absence of a workers' movement in which we participate."

"Although perhaps under-theorised, as a concept, the 'Dual Task' has been vital to avoiding the danger of sectarianism in the post-Soviet world because we understood that the revolutionary party could not be built separately from the rebuilding of workers' consciousness and mass organisations generally. Even with all the post-crisis struggles, processes of revolution and counter revolution in different countries, mass movements of workers fighting austerity, oppression, and environmental destruction, and corresponding advances in consciousness, it still is the case that socialist and revolutionary consciousness is at an historic low and a key task for revolutionaries is to assist in its rebuilding."

These three quotes, are a re-interpretation of the position of the CWI, and raise a number of issues, but one more quote might clarify issues a little further. In point 32, criticising the supposed position of the NEC Majority and the 'Co-Ordination' or IEC Majority, the Dual Task document says:

“There is a clear tendency [on behalf of the NEC M and international Co-Ordination -- ed]to suggest that a revolutionary party can be built separate from the process of the building of the workers' movement. Part of this is to emphasise that if only we had a substantial revolutionary party, then we would be able to play a much greater role in developing the broader workers' movement. In reality, the two processes are completely intertwined. **It will not be possible to develop substantial revolutionary parties,** without a development of class consciousness and the development of broader political organisations of the working class. While of course it is possible in the current political situation to **grow the party in ones and twos**, develop our cadre etc., it will take developments in the political situation, consciousness and class struggle to move more fundamentally develop a mass or even semi mass revolutionary party.”

It seems from this that a very formalistic and rigid approach to consciousness is being adopted, one that doesn't correspond to the richness of actual developments. For example, previously it was a position put forward that Sinn Fein would grow numerically as well as in votes, because of the absence of an alternative and the 'line of least resistance'. That didn't happen, events were richer than comrades imagined. Sinn Fein didn't develop because of a lack of development of consciousness, but actually because significant layers saw through them, that is, their political consciousness had developed even though there hadn't been a rebuilding of the workers' movement.

Of course in a general sense it is true to say that without a profound development of class consciousness and class struggle, a revolutionary party of a semi mass or mass character, what the comrades refer to as a

substantial revolutionary party, won't be built.

That is obvious. But why the focus at this time just on a semi-mass or mass revolutionary party? Is this a sign of frustration and impatience? Between only recruiting in ones and twos to having a semi mass and mass revolutionary party there is a huge gap, and space for development. But the comrades are not focused on maximising the potential in that space - something which could be extremely significant. Instead their focus is on the need to build a broad mass left first. In reality this points to a clear staged conclusion: that a mass left is necessary before there can be significant development in the revolutionary party, that gains before then will and can only be limited.

As subjective factors can also impact whether developments happen, what if a combination of objective and subjective factors means there is a further delay in the rebuilding of the workers' movement generally? Does that mean inevitably that consciousness must wait and we will face slim pickings for years?

What if, as the CWI discussed years ago, reformist entities or parties come into being but also are smashed relatively quickly because ultimately there is not much space for stable reformism? Does that mean consciousness and our development are destined to be continually stunted? What if we are able to play a role in some regional struggle which doesn't change the overall situation but does in some areas or among some layers? Could we not move ahead in a relatively significant way?

The model and conclusions of the perspectives that the comrades seem to be developing are static and can't take account of the dynamic and developing situation we are in.

It has been the case for a period of years that if the Party in Ireland had more members doing recruitment work and more space to concentrate on qualitatively

improving consolidation (which is essential to cadre development), we could have broken out of the 300 members syndrome that we have been in, based on the strength of our ideas and methods. Could we have 400 or 500 members now? Yes, in the current conditions such growth could be targeted realistically if there is a correct rebalancing of the work. That isn't a semi mass or mass basis but it would in turn transform our position and open up further potential.

Overestimation of other forces - Underestimation of best layers

"The overestimate and the false estimate of the role of organisations in the class struggle of the proletariat is generally reinforced by the underestimate of the unorganised proletarian mass and of their political maturity." Rosa Luxemburg, The Mass Strike

What is indicated above is an overly negative assessment of consciousness. In part this is because the comrades focus on the general, the average, the semi mass and mass layers. This was illustrated in the comments by the comrades regarding the women's movement and their overstatement of the influence of Identity Politics at this time. There are different layers of the working class and youth. Many have been radicalised way before the average. The rich discussion on perspectives at our 2018 conference identified a shift in consciousness developing beneath the surface amongst key layers in response to lack of housing, precarious work and oppression. An example of this accumulated anger bubbling over was seen weeks later in the eruption of the #suemepaddy protests which we were able to play a key role in. The NEC Majority has been criticised for focusing on the best layers of workers, women and youth. But that is necessary if a revolutionary party is to maximise its potential.

As well as looking towards the mass, there is a consistent tendency for the TTPF comrades to focus towards existing and

established parties or entities, but the comrades seem somewhat blind to the fresher layers who are emerging independent of the current political scene, many of whom are alienated from it. Disappointment and impatience could be factors in why the comrades focus on broader tasks seeking and desiring a major development, but a consequence is to understate the potential to build the revolutionary party in the months and years ahead.

If a turn towards mass and broad work is undertaken and there isn't an active and political response, then quickly the shift in the character of how the party operates will combine with opportunist pressure and can bear down heavily in terms of the consciousness of the comrades, our programme and our methods, even putting the party at risk. On the other hand, while there may not be a basis to build a broad new left formation there can regardless be enough of a basis to build the revolutionary party, which is the opposite of what the comrades are indicating. Unless there is a momentum behind a new broad formation, where it is obviously becoming a force, it can tend to fall back. Momentum in this regard is a key ingredient. Yet slow but regular recruitment in our party can mean we become significantly strengthened over a relatively short time frame. Our growth is not necessarily linked in a definite manner with the broad formation.

The TTPF treat the fact that the NEC Majority believe it is necessary to rebalance the work so the party can grow as a sign of sectarianism. Yet it was the NEC Majority who first brought the Dual Task into this discussion and we remain committed to assisting the rebuilding of the working class movement in all its aspects.

The TTPF have to say that they aren't in favour of an increase in mass work, but that is going against the logic of their position. Their general approach is to advocate turning out and campaigning. After the election they sharply criticised the party for not campaigning and fighting enough,

clearly implying we should return to the previous levels.

Dangers of 'substitutionalism' and our role in the movement

The level of mass campaigning and the nature of it, between 2010 and 2016, went way beyond our responsibilities to the Dual Task. We engaged in an exceptional undertaking - with serious danger of a major defeat for the Irish working class, potentially on a par with Greece (a defeat without a fight is the worst kind), we decided to put everything into trying to facilitate a generalised fightback on charges/taxes and austerity in the context of the Great Recession, trying to avoid a crushing defeat. We spectacularly succeeded but at a serious cost to the cadre reserves and political cohesion of the Party.

Unlike what the TTPF imply, the NEC Majority have not claimed that mass and public work inevitably contradict with the building of the revolutionary party. We have said the two can go forward together in a real sense if there is a strong enough cadre capable of dealing with the pressure and the actual political tensions that do exist in these two tasks.

The TTPF previously put forward the argument that, with correct transitional demands and extensive and continuing discussions on this in the movements and in the Party, there isn't really an issue with the amount of mass work you do: the transitional demands and programmatic discussions will result in growth and building the cadre. Yet this is simply not connected to the complexities in the situation - the depth and nature of the vacuum that exists and the low consciousness in working class communities.

Seriously fighting on issues takes up much more time and is much more intense because of the low level of consciousness and the low level of activity and activists. The depth of the vacuum sucks our comrades in because we have the political and action programme that is needed. We

have consciously tried to break out of the tendency to become a substitute for the movement that doesn't yet exist by building activists and their capability, but in general, with some notable exceptions, success has been limited.

The example that was given by the TTPF to illustrate that more mass work doesn't conflict with recruitment was the "Seattle Model". However, the situation in the US is clearly much more open and favourable in terms of building and recruiting than here, so that is a critical difference. However, even there, the active membership in Seattle is down massively compared to a couple of years ago, in part a reflection of the difficulties of politically consolidating the previous gains, and a re-balance and re-organisation has been necessary. This is why we need to consider carefully when deciding to take initiatives and take a balanced approach. Otherwise, the party can be severely undermined.

Elevating the wrong yardsticks

We are a fundamentally different organisation to the SWP, but their evolution graphically illustrates the reality that exists between the pressures of mass and electoral and public work and the building of a politically cohesive organisation. The SWP has been liquidated as a Party, now an irregular SWN (network) exists, and all the focus is on PBP, which in no way could be considered a revolutionary or Marxist organisation. But there is an additional factor here. Unlike us, over the last years the SWP didn't take the responsibility and didn't play a serious role in the fight on the household tax, the water charges or on repeal for that matter. So we face significantly stronger pressure from a mass involvement and orientation than the SWP because of the serious approach we take to struggle, but they have already buckled to opportunist/electoralist pressures.

We have been discussing these issues of the tensions in the areas of work and the Dual Task for more than twenty years. The pressure of the time that the mass work

takes up is an aspect, but it's not the key issue necessarily. It's the impact that the mass work has on the consciousness of the comrades, and that has in general been to diminish the political level and consciousness of the need to recruit, consolidate and develop the revolutionary party.

What's required politically to fight on issues and in a campaign on a daily basis, or winning or defending council or TD positions is different than what is required to recruit to the party and develop the cadre. We described previously how the mass and public work creates new yardsticks for the comrades to focus on to the detriment of the revolutionary consciousness necessary to build the party. The availability of public money undoubtedly also had a major impact in diminishing the spirit of self sacrifice which is necessary for building the party.

This idea of new yardsticks is also reflected in the broader orientation indicated in the material of the TTPF. The comrades broader orientation has been reflected in: The document on women, where the comrades argued that we should have oriented more toward T4Y and should have worked with others on the left who were organising and playing a role, even though there was no group playing such a role.

The document on the elections where the comrades focused on votes and judged that we had lost a huge portion of our political support, based solely on the outcome of the local elections.

The comrades focus on the vote in the Euro campaign, when it was clearly established, well in advance, that recruitment and party building was the key target of the campaign.

The comrades constant comparison to the number of votes and elected positions won by us and PBP, as if we were in a competition. The view that because PBP would be seen to be ahead of us electorally, that they would be the more attractive force on the radical left, completely diminishing

the importance of our socialist programme compared to theirs, and our ability to take imaginative initiatives that connect with young people. The logic of this approach would be that we go head to head with PBP and go on the treadmill of trying to get ever increasing numbers of votes, councillors or TDs - that is, become electoralist.

The assertion that with the loss of councillors, and possibly TDs position, that our ability to be the dominant force on the left but also to have the decisive and leading impact in the movements and struggles to come would be massively curbed. The assertion that we got our leading position in struggles via the elected positions was incorrect. This also demonstrated a diminished understanding on the role of our ideas, programme, bold methods and the hard work of the party itself, as the key factors that gave us our positions of leadership in the recent years. In many respects our most successful mass campaigning was with ROSA around repeal and we started significantly behind other forces when we moved decisively into this field in 2013.

The document on the United Front, highlighting Sinn Fein, while limiting the criticisms made on them, as indicated in paragraphs 46, 81 and 82.

The prescriptive position that party should immediately be part of and try to build XR, without an assessment and discussion on perspectives for it and how the environmental movement may emerge here.

Parallels with former minority in the US

The broader orientation of the TTPF seems quite developed. It has a certain parallel with pressures and situations here affecting comrades in the past, but also with the evolution of our former comrades in the US who left the organisation two years.

Before PL/SK and their group left, these comrades advocated that all SA members should join the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA). Instead our comrades argued

that putting all our comrades, given the inexperience that exists as the party had grown rapidly, would create serious dangers and the potential was limited. Instead the comrades argued for an orientation to the fresher layers, including to workers, organised and unorganised, as they felt there was a prospect of labor unrest. Now all of PL/SK's group are in the DSA and they have announced that their grouping does not organise on a democratic centralist basis, but the perspectives of the comrades has been borne out with a major increase in struggles, like at Stop & Shop, where the comrades had brilliant interventions.

When JS spoke endorsing the approach to mass work and building in Seattle at the National Council meeting in February, she was speaking of the way in which PL/SK organised the work in the city. However over the last two years there has been a backlash from among the members against the top down and unpolitical approach that had existed. At the June NC, PM indicated that he had recently discussed with PL and thought his and SK's document on the crisis in the CWI to be the best on the dispute. Comrades can discuss with whoever they choose, however it is extremely likely that there is at least political co-operation among the leading comrades in the TTPF and PL and SK's group, notwithstanding PL and SK's hostility to the party in the US.

Many comrades who have had the opportunity to read the documents of the factional dispute in the US have commented on the similarity of the issues, approaches and the language used in the two disputes. That could be simply because they are dealing with universal themes, but also because there is another international connection, on top of the one with the 7 members of the IDWCTCWI and the former IS.

5/ SA Executive Committee Reply to Recent Resignations Signed by members of the Executive Committee and other comrades who have been regularly attending EC meetings: Alan A., Bryan K., Calvin P. Elan A., Erin B., Justin H., Keely M., Kelly B., Kshama S., Tom C.

We are living through capitalism's biggest economic crisis since the Great Depression of the 1930s, detonated by the Coronavirus pandemic. Working people face mass unemployment and millions face the threat of hunger. The neocolonial world faces an even bigger catastrophe. The forty year era of capitalism which we label "neoliberalism" is coming to an end. This does not mean we are heading into a phase of "kinder, gentler" capitalism. If anything it will be more brutal. However, the new reality will also strip away illusions and will open up the possibility of building a far more decisive challenge to the ruling class. The workplace struggles we have seen are an indication of the objective possibility of building a fighting labor movement, though in the short term it will probably be the struggle against evictions and against cuts to public services that will be key.

Never in our lifetimes has the role of socialists been more important or has there been more objective potential to build the socialist movement. However, it is precisely such turning points in history which expose both the strengths and weaknesses of socialist organizations and can lead to the sharpest debates and divisions. A number of comrades around the country recently received a 32-page resignation statement entitled "Into the Socialist Mainstream" from Pat Ayers, Brandon Madson, Ty Moore, and Robert Shields, longstanding SA members, explaining why they have left us to join the Reform & Revolution (R&R) group in DSA. The following day the Executive Committee (EC) decided to send the statement to the entire membership to ensure all comrades, instead of just the arbitrary list they sent it to, could read and discuss it while we formulated our response.

The following document is not intended to be a point-by-point response to the resignation statement by Pat, Ty, and the other comrades. The resignation statement contains countless inaccuracies, half-truths, and misrepresentations of Socialist Alternative's work, debates, and political positions. But while we will refer to some of these we do not think a long refutation of every false point is the most useful approach. We have also produced a companion statement which focuses on Tax Amazon and our recent work in Seattle as a refutation of the false claims Pat and Ty make about this critical aspect of our national work.

We aim rather to clarify the underlying political differences between ourselves and Reform and Revolution which the comrades have regrettably decided to join. Pat and Ty do raise a number of important issues on strategy and tactics which absolutely deserve to be discussed and debated in the Marxist movement even if we strongly disagree with the conclusions they have drawn. This reply should also be seen as a contribution to a broader process of political clarification in our section and our international in the wake of a series of bitter and difficult disputes. This document will not deal in detail with the specifics of our approach to DSA, though further material will be produced soon dealing with both an analysis of DSA's trajectory as well as our tactical approach.

The debate with Pat and Ty in recent months focused on how we relate to DSA. The comrades have claimed we were reluctant to debate their proposal to dissolve our organization and re-form as a caucus in DSA which they began to raise informally last summer and brought to the EC in October. However, it was not feasible to open up a debate in the organization in the most crucial moment of the Seattle re-election campaign, something they agreed to and which we definitely stand by. Immediately after the election, we held a three-day in-person National Committee meeting which featured a day-long discussion on DSA and their proposal.

We then produced a members bulletin which included their material and the EC's reply. We discussed the issues again at the January World Congress and at the February NC, and developed plans for regional debates across the country where their arguments could be heard and grappled with by all comrades. Soon after that, the comrades declared that they were dropping the discussion, including pulling out of the regional debates. A few weeks later, we received their resignation which confirmed our opinion that their differences went further than they indicated in the recent debate.

In joining R&R, Ty and Pat are also joining a small international trend with co-thinkers in Germany and Ireland totalling less than 100 members worldwide. Their Irish sister group is called Radical, Internationalist, Socialist and Environmentalist (RISE) and is led by Paul Murphy, member of the Irish Parliament. RISE began as the Transform the Party Faction (TTRF) which left the Socialist Party in Ireland in September 2019. It is important to point this out because in reality, the split in the Committee for a Workers' International (CWI; the predecessor to International Socialist Alternative) did not just SA Executive Committee Reply to Recent Resignations Signed by members of the Executive Committee and other comrades who have been regularly attending EC meetings: Alan A., Bryan K., Calvin P. Elan A., Erin B., Justin H., Keely M., Kelly B., Kshama S., Tom C. 28 involve the group which left with the old International Secretariat (IS) majority around Peter Taaffe but also two other trends, namely Izquierda Revolucionaria (IR) in the Spanish state and its sister groups, and also the trend including R&R and RISE. We will make reference to all these groups in this document.

Summarizing Key Points of Contention

While we believe it is essential to not exaggerate, it is also necessary to be clear, precise and call things by their right names. Pat and Ty claim we have departed from the best traditions of the CWI and are headed in

a more sectarian direction. They specifically reference how ISA addresses the "dual tasks" of the organization, our approach to the united front, as well as our approach to internal debate here and internationally.

We will address these points and go on to show that Pat, Ty, and R&R are moving in an opportunist direction, particularly in their approach to the Democratic Party, accommodating and tailoring their arguments to the activist layer more than the fresh layer of radicalizing workers and youth. While making many references to Trotsky and the Bolsheviks, their political approach diverges in important ways with the tradition of the healthy, revolutionary periods of the Third and Fourth Internationals.

The 32-page resignation statement makes almost no mention of the pandemic and ensuing economic devastation. Their analysis is not rooted in either the reality of the work of Socialist Alternative, the massive changes in the world situation, or the perspectives for the cataclysmic events likely to unfold in the coming years. In many ways, this is a running theme throughout the debate with the comrades who resigned. In their long statements on perspectives and tactics for the DSA, the monumental worldwide struggles of 2019 were barely mentioned, and the increase in labor strikes were only commented on in passing.

While the organization is working alongside others to build a tenants fight back with "Rent Strike 2020," this campaign gets no mention in the resignation document. We initiated "Workers Speak Out," bringing us into contact with some of the best fighters among frontline workers in this pandemic; this isn't touched on even briefly. Yet Ty and the other comrades accuse the organization of taking a "sectarian" turn without even acknowledging the main areas of work for Socialist Alternative. They draw pessimistic conclusions for SA's growth in the midst of one of our fastest periods of recruitment in our history with nearly 250 new members in the past six months.

We also want to highlight up front that in their 32-page document, the comrades state that “to emphasize a message that sounds like ‘don’t vote for Biden’ will cut socialists off from large sections of workers and youth and make it harder to spread our calls for working-class political independence and socialism.” We think this is a capitulation to lesser evilism and a centerpiece of the debate, but they unfortunately did not put this position in writing when they were in the organization, only upon leaving. Ty and others claim that we’ve somehow moved away from the approach we took in the 2016 election, but in reality this buckling to lesser evilism is a dramatic departure from a Marxist position of working-class independence. This is part of a wider bending to pressures from the Democratic Party which we’ll detail more at length below.

Ty, Pat, and the other comrades claim that Socialist Alternative and the ISA is moving away from building the wider working-class movement and the Marxist approach to the united front. However, the comrades who resigned fail to apply these concepts to a changing situation, downplay the role of perspectives for explosive events, orient only toward existing activists rather than those moving into struggle, and denigrate the important role that even a small revolutionary organization can play in the current period.

Lessons of Recent Faction Fights

We believe that at the root of the fights and splits in our organization, here and internationally over the past three years, are different appraisals of the historical conjuncture, including on the lessons of the past period and also on how we should orient our forces to the coming very different period.

But of course the full implications of an internal struggle may not be clear until after its formal conclusion. Furthermore serious struggles about fundamental questions may begin over apparently secondary issues.

It is necessary in this context to say something about the 2017-18 internal dispute in Socialist Alternative, especially for newer members who joined in the wake of its conclusion in October 2018. This dispute began in April 2017 with the refusal of Philip Locker and Stephan Kimmerle, now leaders of Reform and Revolution, to accept the decision of the national EC, of which they were members, to make changes in the leadership team in Seattle. This decision was the result of a serious crisis and the breakdown of working relations. The national leadership has the right to intervene in local areas in crisis situations though it should of course be very careful in exercising this power. Any such decisions are subject to the review of the National Committee and ultimately the National Convention, the highest decision making body of our organization.

In retrospect, it is clear that Philip and Stephan were correct to say that removing Stephan from the Seattle EC did change the political balance in the local leadership. This may not have been fully clear to some of us at the time but the clashes in Seattle did reflect real political differences. Stephan and Philip were clearly within their rights to oppose this decision. But what was their actual approach? Did they accept that the EC had the right to do what it did but then seek to bring out the political issues with the aim of proving over time that their approach was better?

What became evident over the course of the following months was that they were not prepared to accept a situation where their primacy in the local leadership was questioned. When they went further and began to form a faction they did so on the basis of a series of exaggerated and false narratives including that the democracy of the organization was in danger, that comrades were being witchhunted out of full time positions because of political differences and that the EC majority were a rotten bloc of “abstract propagandists” and those “bending to opportunistic pressures.” (some of the key documents from the

dispute are contained in Members Bulletin 92 and 93)

By the beginning of 2018, Pat and Ty, who by their own account agreed on most political issues with Philip and Stephan, were so horrified by their increasingly destructive approach to the dispute that they joined the EC and NC majority. They revealed to us subsequently that Philip and Stephan had concluded by late 2017 that they were heading out of SA and the CWI. This was even before the issues had been fully aired on the National Committee let alone the wider organization! The key point is that Philip and Stephan were not prepared to be in a minority for any extended period of time.

From then on, they focused on finding comrades with discontents of various sorts, pandering for example to those who reject aspects of democratic centralism, and then recruiting and consolidating them into a hardened group prepared to split. This approach is the opposite of waging a political fight to clarify perspectives and program with the goal of strengthening the party. It had more the character of a wrecking operation and the experience left many comrades in Seattle, where the battle was concentrated, exhausted. Some were unfortunately demoralized and left the party.

In the fall of 2018, in the run up to the National Convention, they actually refused to participate in debates which the leadership wished to organize in different regions around the country so that the widest number of comrades could hear the discussion which had been heavily concentrated in Seattle. They resigned weeks before the convention, declaring that the debates were pointless anyway -- "a charade with a predetermined outcome" -- thus dismissing the capacity of the membership to make up its own mind and predicting the convention would be "stage managed." This was the assessment of the membership of the organization in whose leadership they played a central role for many years! Anybody who attended the 2018 Convention can attest to the fact that

there were lively debates about many issues and resolutions and to call it "stage managed" is ridiculous.

Ty in particular played a key role in the final stages of this very difficult and bitter dispute, giving key leadoffs and co-authoring a number of the decisive EC and NC majority documents. The key point we developed was the need to build a genuinely collective leadership of a working-class, Marxist organization which was not simply dependent on a couple individuals and the need for healthy methods of debate. We also pointed out that the methods Philip and Stephan were using would have further political consequences. Additionally other political issues began to emerge more clearly in the final stages of this protracted dispute. For example, Philip raised that SA should be prepared to dissolve itself in order to enter DSA, much as Pat and Ty did more recently.

But while a number of comrades began to raise broader political criticisms of the political direction of Philip and Stephan's faction, the NC majority was not able to go further in writing because Pat and Ty would not agree. This is what makes their claim in their resignation statement that recent debates in the organization, including 2017-8, have been "depoliticized" so ironic. It also completely omits the very politicized debates at both the 2016 and 2018 conventions on the "Bernie tactic" and our general approach to the new left who were trying to transform the Democratic Party. These debates though very sharp at times did not lead to immediate splits and many of the comrades who disagreed with the majority are still members, some playing leading roles in our organization.

We who were in the EC majority at the time would acknowledge mistakes and weaknesses on our side in how this struggle in 2017-8 was conducted. We were too hesitant and took too much time to bring the issues in dispute in the EC to the NC and then from the NC to the membership as a whole. In large part this flowed from our desire not to break the unity in the

leadership that had been achieved at such cost in 2009-2010 after a very challenging period for the organization in the late '90s and early 2000s. The other key problem was that while we focused correctly on the questions of political method and how to build a collective leadership which are in themselves key political issues for a revolutionary organization, we did not flesh out the wider political issues that were emerging especially toward the end of the dispute. We feel that the outcome of the more recent debate on DSA which has culminated in Pat and Ty's resignation is an opportunity to correct that weakness, which is part of the goal of this response and discussions that should take place in the branches on both documents. But while hindsight is always clearer, important differences had actually begun to emerge a couple years earlier.

The "Bernie Tactic"

In late 2015, the leadership of SA, first the EC and then the NC, adopted the key elements of what came to be called the "Bernie tactic," certainly not without controversy. The key idea was the need to engage with the newly radicalizing layer coming around the Sanders campaign and not to be seen to be standing aloof because this crucial phenomenon was taking place inside the Democratic primary.

We stressed that the Sanders' campaign was contradictory: that, on the one hand, it represented the faint outlines of a new party given its program and refusal of all corporate money; on the other hand it pointed radicalizing workers and youth back towards the Democratic Party. We said that our approach was not to "enter" into the Democratic Party but rather to stage a raid. Sanders might win but it was far more likely he would be blocked and we would then seek to help lead those who wanted to keep fighting for the "political revolution" to find the road out of the Democratic Party. If he somehow managed to win, the need for independent organization would be posed even more sharply.

Our perspective played out dramatically with a rigged primary leading to the 2016 convention in Philadelphia where a significant section of Sanders delegates walked out, which we played a role in organizing. We initiated a petition calling on Sanders to continue running as an independent which 125,000 people signed. Ty and Pat try to argue that this petition was successful mainly because it mentioned "safe states" and try to compare this to our petitions in 2020. What they fail to address is that we are in a vastly different political situation with a global pandemic, Bernie exiting the race earlier than in 2016, and with a more full-throated endorsement of the Democratic nominee, leading many to understand that there's no hope of Bernie continuing his campaign.

Of course, the Bernie tactic became more protracted than many comrades would have initially anticipated, given the dramatic subsequent growth of the DSA and the number of DSA and Justice Democrat-affiliated candidates who ran successfully on Democratic ballot lines, most prominently AOC and Rashida Tlaib. We correctly extended the approach we adopted to Sanders to their campaigns in 2018.

Two Interpretations

But by then it was increasingly clear that there were two interpretations of the "Bernie tactic." In retrospect, it seems there were two different approaches from the start.

For the EC majority this was indeed a tactic rather than a long-term orientation. We were keenly aware that the majority of the American left from the '30s onward remained in the orbit of or buried inside the Democratic Party, the "graveyard of social movements." The prime example of this was the Communist Party which could have played a key role in launching a workers party during the emergence of the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) in the late '30s. Instead they criminally chose to help build a "popular front" behind Roosevelt. For decades afterwards, the CP, while nominally standing their own

candidate for president, would call for a vote to “defeat the right.” This was code for the idea of supporting the Democrats and blocking with the “progressive wing” of the capitalist class to defeat reaction, as the necessary “first stage” before the question of building an independent party and fighting for socialism could be posed.

A key point of the program of our organization in the U.S. when it formed in the ‘80s (originally we were called Labor Militant) was to fight for the unions to form an independent labor party. However, we also engaged with Jesse Jackson’s Rainbow Coalition in 1984 which in some ways was a precursor to Sanders’ campaigns.

The last big opportunity to build a mass party of the left in this country was in the ‘70s when there was a huge wave of class struggle, along with mass movements against the Vietnam War, for black liberation, and women’s liberation. At that time, it was clear that a new party would have to have the support of a section of the labor movement and could be fought for directly in mass struggles and organizations. There was also an organized left within the Democratic Party but this was broadly the right wing of the mass movement.

This is what made the situation over the past few years different. A new left emerged on a scale unseen since the ‘70s but there were not, with the partial exception of the teachers’ revolt, sustained mass struggles linked to real organizations. The new left turned to the project of “re-31 forming” or “transforming” the Democratic Party and to a degree we had to go through this experience with them while patiently pointing out that this would not work and that Sanders had to begin turning his movement into a “party within a party” if he was to carry the struggle forward for his pro-working-class program.

But for Philip and Stephan, the Bernie tactic became more than a necessary-but-temporary compromise. It became part of the rationalization for a deeper orientation, pointing to at least a partial acceptance of

working in the Democratic Party framework. For instance, Reform and Revolution does not provoke debate on whether or not socialists should use Democratic Party ballot lines in their current petition to the DSA leadership. While we have taken a skillful approach to leftists running as Democrats, we nevertheless clearly argue that working-class independence is necessary. The path to a new workers’ party will be paved with bold initiatives for independent action and effective debate against wrong strategies, not bending to prevailing and mistaken moods among the existing activist layer.

The 2020 Elections

2020 is not 2018 nor is it 2016. In 2016, Trump was a looming threat and many found it very hard to imagine how he could actually win. In 2020, Trump is the sitting reactionary president and there is an intense desire in wide sections of the working class to end his disastrous reign. In 2020, Sanders’ campaign also went further to the left, reflecting the further radicalization of millions of workers and young people. We correctly endorsed Sanders and energetically intervened in his campaign. By late February, the situation pointed to the potential for an even bigger confrontation with the Democratic establishment as they focused all their efforts on blocking him. As we know this was cut across by the mass manipulation event which put the desperately weak Biden in front. Thus the establishment ended one crisis by creating another.

Last fall, Pat and Ty began to raise with a number of comrades that if Trump ran an even more reactionary campaign than in 2016 and Bernie was blocked, that we would need to consider giving an element of support to the Democrats’ nominee.

They pointed to a debate in the CWI in 2002 about the second runoff stage of the French presidential election that year where the left had been eliminated and the two candidates still in the race were the right wing president Jacques Chirac and the far right candidate of the National Front, Jean

Marie Le Pen. The EC of our German section argued that we should call for a vote for Chirac because of the threat of the far right coming to power. The IS at the time argued against this with two provisos, that advocating a vote for Chirac might be correct if Le Pen was likely to win which he wasn't or if our French section were a much bigger organization and not a small propaganda organization.

We fail to see how this applies to the 2020 election in the U.S. The implicit comparison of Trump to Le Pen and the National Front which contained an historical fascist core is a concession to the liberal argument that this election is an "existential" choice and that we must oppose the "slide to fascism." Marxists should think very, very carefully before giving any support to the "lesser evil" in the race to determine who will be the commander in chief of U.S. imperialism.

The comrades also pointed to the example of the elections in Brazil in 2018 where our sister organization, the LSR, gave very critical support in the second round to the Workers Party alongside a call for mass mobilizations against Jair Bolsonaro. While Bolsonaro seems to have modeled aspects of his approach on Trump's, the situation has important differences. This includes Brazil's history of brutal right wing military dictatorship which Bolsonaro directly appealed to, publicly threatening during the election to kill his opponents on the left. At the same time while the Workers Party has a leadership which went over to a thoroughly neoliberal position and became deeply corrupt, its history is very different to the Democrats and it is seen differently by important sections of the working class.

A number of EC comrades pushed back hard on these points and Pat and Ty agreed to drop them. But while they now say they don't support a vote to Biden, we still see an echo of their previous position in a sentence in their resignation statement which is worth quoting again:

"To emphasize a message that sounds like 'don't vote for Biden' will cut socialists off

from large sections of workers and youth and make it harder to spread our calls for working-class political independence and socialism."

Of course, we wish to make it clear that we fully sympathize with the mass desire to get rid of Trump. At the same time, polls show that over 20% of Sanders supporters will not vote for Biden. The Tara Reade accusations and the Democratic Party cover-up have produced widespread discussions on the hypocrisy of the Democratic establishment, Biden's record, and the role of the Democratic Party. With Ty and Pat's position, we'd be absent from putting forward a bold position in this context. We realize that we will need to be skillful in arguing against Biden, but it is also an opportunity to stand against the stream and articulate a concrete call for working-class political independence from the two parties of the billionaire class.

Though certainly not huge, there is a significant layer of Bernie supporters and working people generally for whom this message will resonate and to whom, in an otherwise horrible and difficult time for the left, we can stand out as one of the only forces with a clearly articulated principled opposition to both Trump and Biden. Despite the enormous difficulties of swimming against the tide of lesser evilism, with this sort of approach we can actually build and recruit to the organization from this layer in the Fall. If we adopted the approach advocated by Ty and Pat, this would not be possible, or where it was done, it would be on a confused and politically less clear basis.

We also need to patiently explain that it was actually the Democrats and Obama who laid the ground for the Tea Party and then Trump by bailing out Wall Street while millions lost their jobs and homes after 2008-9. It is worth noting that Socialist Alternative stood against the tide of popular opinion in 2008 when the mood was not just "lesser evilism" but genuine excitement for Obama. As we detailed in our analysis of the collapse of the International Socialist

Organization (ISO) (see Members Bulletin 107), this positioned the organization to make clear arguments for independent working class action when the situation opened up, unlike the ISO. If Biden wins, the same will be true again. The fight for working class political independence cannot be fudged or avoided by only addressing yourself to a narrow activist layer; a clear position has to be consistently put forward.

From the point of view of perspectives for struggle, a weak Democratic government is preferable to Trump being re-elected but we must determinedly argue that unless a new political force and a fighting labor movement are built, the next Democratic administration will help create an even more dangerous phenomenon than Trump.

An article by Stephan about Elizabeth Warren in November of last year (“Who’s afraid of Elizabeth Warren?”) reflects the same soft approach. In it Stephan argues against the left making sharp criticisms of Warren. While it was correct to argue against a denunciatory approach to Warren, the general message of the article was that it was really exciting that there were two progressive candidates in the race, just that Bernie was somewhat better. We, on the other hand, pointed out, skillfully, that Warren was the “left wing of the establishment.” Our criticisms were fully borne out by the rotten role she played in the latter stages of the primary where she joined the establishment effort to block Bernie while retreating on Medicare for All and accepting corporate money.

When considering the whole direction of R&R and the numerous concessions to “lesser evilism” and liberal sentiment we can’t help asking: given that Ty and Pat are fond of saying that we are abandoning the historical approach of the CWI on a range of issues, does their opportunist adaptation to the left liberal milieu not stand in sharp contrast to the political approach of Labor Militant? Doesn’t it instead echo the “fight the right” lesser evilism of the CP and the earlier DSA which we relentlessly fought against for so many years?

Here is what Ty and Pat said about lesser evilism in their excellent 2016 article which we are using in our New Members Reading Pack:

“Wherever the left fails to organize a bold, fighting, working-class challenge to corporate politics-as-usual, popular rage at the failures of capitalism will be channeled behind right-wing ‘anti-establishment’ figures like Trump. The more the left ties itself to the Democratic Party, the more left leaders undermine their own credibility by covering up for big business politicians, and the more political space they create for Trump or other brands of right populist bigotry to flourish.”

In fact it is striking that R&R, have managed to end up to the right of Jacobin editor and Bread and Roses leader Bashkar Sunkara, an avowed left-reformist. While their proposal for a Democratic Socialist Party sounds a lot like Bashkar’s call for a “party-surrogate” on the left that would run candidates on Democratic ballot lines, Bashkar did not hesitate to criticize Warren and recently said he would be supporting Howie Hawkins for president:

“I’m going to vote for Howie Hawkins, but I don’t believe in building the Green Party as an institution. Like millions of voters, I am frustrated with what feels like a ‘shoot me or stab me’ choice between two corporate puppets” (Nation, 5/4/20).

Of course, under the pressure of events, R&R could change their emphasis, as the crisis of the Democratic Party sharpens and explosive events put the question of a new party squarely on the table. But if they do, this will be them tail-ending the best elements, not giving them a lead as a real revolutionary party seeks to do. What is most striking is that R&R, while formally adhering to a revolutionary outlook, is now adapting itself to the reformist activist layer in DSA, much as we said they would.

From “Safe States” to the “Democratic Socialist Party”

In their resignation statement, Pat and Ty return to the question of the “safe states strategy” which Philip and Stephan went to great lengths to emphasize in 2016. 33 This led to debate within the EC which was an early indication of developing divisions. In essence the “safe states” idea - that a left presidential candidate could agree to only run in non “swing states” in order to remove the question of being a “spoiler” - while not inadmissible in principle, was elevated by them into being the main way to fight lesser evilism.

To emphasize this to the degree that Philip and Stephan wanted (what Ty and Pat call a “sensitive approach”), objectively cut across the idea that Sanders could have won as an independent in a three-way race with Trump and Clinton, drawing votes from both of them. But this was in fact the key message that resonated with the most advanced layer: that Bernie could win! As George Brown correctly pointed out in the discussions at that time, there could potentially be quite a few “non-safe” “swing states.” What were you telling working-class voters in those states to do? Stay home? Vote for Hillary? Philip and Stephan thereby turned a secondary argument against lesser evilism into a concession to mainstream liberal sentiment.

Philip and Stephan wanted the safe states issue to be a major discussion in the organization and a key part of our overall message. They saw it as a showcase of the brilliance of their “skillful approach.” The majority of the EC pushed back but in retrospect should have pushed back even harder.

Fast forward to today and R&R is calling for DSA, Bernie, and others to launch a “Democratic Socialist Party” and arguing upfront for a “fusion” approach where some candidates of the new party would use the Democratic ballot line and others would stand independently. This is how they

explained it in a recent article on CounterPunch:

“Forming a new party does not mean we should abandon this kind of tactical flexibility. Whether to run on a Democratic, Independent, or Democratic Socialist ballot line needs to be decided on a case by case basis” (“After Bernie: It’s Time to Start Talking About a Democratic Socialist Party,” 4/23/20).

This in reality goes far beyond the attempt to engage with those who mistakenly wish to try to reform the Democratic Party while skilfully pointing to the need for a new party. No matter what Pat and Ty say, it is not the same as the critical support we gave AOC and Julia Salazar in 2018. It effectively gives support not just to particular candidates but to the underlying strategy of the reformists to use Democratic Party ballot lines and to the pragmatic idea that what ballot line you stand on is a secondary issue. As Pat himself wrote at the time in relation to Salazar’s campaign, explaining our position:

“Socialist Alternative is calling on registered Democrats in the district to vote for Salazar. But we also disagree with her decision to run as a Democrat. With more than 800 members of DSA in her district and 4,500 citywide, along with the fact that Republicans are a fringe group, a viable independent campaign would have been entirely possible. Such a campaign could have engaged with voters on all the key issues and spoken clearly against the idea that the Democratic Party represents the interest of working people.”

It must also be said that the Democratic Socialist Party idea is not the same as calling for a new party of working people or even a broad left party. It is a narrower, more limited call, addressed more to the DSA layer than to the broader Bernie layer or to workers taking action for safety, tenants now organizing against landlords, or communities who will be moving into struggle against budget cuts and privatization. This is part of what we mean

when we say they have an over-orientation to the existing activist layer as opposed to newly radicalizing workers and young people more broadly, which has long been fundamental to the CWI/ISA's approach.

Approach to Labor: Missing in Action

During the debate with Ty and others on their proposal to dissolve Socialist Alternative and reorganize ourselves as a caucus in the DSA, many comrades spoke about the benefits of having an open independent revolutionary organization in the Stop & Shop strike, the recent Chicago teachers' strike, and the Oakland Educators Association strike. Ty and Pat had little to say about this and instead focused their comments on the labor movement on the importance of debates within DSA, not on the living struggles of our class. This is also reminiscent of Stephan claiming, to a room of dropped jaws, at the July 2018 expanded NC (the last before they left the organization in September) that the discussion was overestimating the indications of a reemergence of the labor movement around the teachers strikes. Nearly two years later, we don't think we even need to explain how wrong this was.

In all 32 pages of their resignation letter, no mention is made of the strikes at Amazon and other non-union workplaces during the current pandemic. This ongoing approach is reflective of a lack of perspectives for struggle and an orientation purely towards the existing activist layer around DSA rather than concrete working class action. With coming budget cuts, threatened privatizations, and attempts at union busting, it will be increasingly important for socialists to build movements such as that against evictions, even if the economic crisis creates a temporary "stunning effect" on strikes. While arguing with DSA members for clear working-class political independence will be an important aspect of the struggle 34 for a workers party, new forces emerging through struggle will play a key role as well.

Socialist Alternative played an important role in the Stop & Shop strike which was detailed

in Members Bulletin 111 (reprinted in the current interim New Members Reading Packet). That Members Bulletin cited numerous debates that took place during the strike in the Boston organization about how to relate to the strike, but didn't name who was on each side of the debates in order to avoid unnecessarily creating tensions in the organization. However, we feel it is now worth noting that Pat consistently argued for an orientation towards "community support" rather than an orientation toward the union rank-and-file putting forward a clear strategy for how the strike could be won. To his credit, at the time Pat admitted that he was wrong, but it's clear to us now that the lessons weren't clearly learned.

Another important point made in the Stop & Shop review material is that it is not actually necessary, and even sometimes not most effective, to orient to DSA in order to have an impact on DSA. It is actually our independent work, such as our election and twice re-election of Kshama Sawant in Seattle, or interventions such as the Stop & Shop strike, that have had the biggest impact on the way DSA members see our organization and our politics.

Both during the DSA debate and in this resignation letter, neither the existing labor struggles nor the potential ones are brought into the equation despite the incessant uses of phrases like "emerging layers of radicalizing workers and youth." These phrases therefore can only be seen as a substitute for DSA which is the only layer worth orienting to in their view or the only layer that is really radicalizing.

The ISA and the Dual Tasks

The differences on how to apply the Bernie tactic and on the 2020 elections reflect deeper theoretical and methodological divergences. As we have said, one thing that is very striking about Pat and Ty's resignation letter is that while they point to differences in "analysis and program," they make only cursory reference to the

enormous changes that have taken place in the objective situation.

These omissions are very relevant to the points Pat and Ty raise about the “dual tasks” which is shorthand used by the CWI to point to the role Marxists must play both in building a revolutionary organization as well as in contributing to the rebuilding of the broader workers’ movement both on the industrial and political plane. According to Pat and Ty:

“We believe theoretical clarity over Marxism’s ‘dual task’ is vital to avoid sectarian mistakes. Formally, the SA EC still subscribes to this concept. Yet, in practice, this idea no longer anchors the strategy and policies of Socialist Alternative. At both the World Congress and the February NC, leading comrades argued that they had not dropped the concept but that they did support an important change in emphasis: if in the past we emphasized the need to rebuild broader mass workers’ parties and organizations of struggle, now the emphasis should shift decisively toward building the revolutionary party” (p. 14).

The claim that ISA is effectively abandoning the “dual tasks” is completely untrue but what is true is that we need to review this concept and the concrete balance between the tasks. In one very general sense, Marxists have always focused, since the time of Marx and Engels, on how to develop the wider organizations of working people and a strategy for the victory of our class while also developing our own distinct revolutionary current.

The Historical Context

But the CWI’s application of this concept has a much more concrete context. It was developed in the wake of the collapse of Stalinism in the late ‘80s/early ‘90s which led to a massive throwback of consciousness, organization and leadership in the advanced sections of the working class internationally. While we did not mourn the end of the Stalinist regimes, the planned economies were a historic gain of the

working class and their demise undermined the idea that a viable alternative to capitalism could be constructed. This ushered in a phase of capitalist triumphalism hard to imagine today.

The other factor in that period was the success of the neoliberal offensive, alongside capitalist globalisation, in driving back the labor movement in many countries including the U.S. and reversing many of the gains made by working people in the postwar period. Leaders of trade unions and former workers’ parties capitulated, believing there was no alternative. This context of the throwback of consciousness and organization explains why the CWI placed such stress on both sides of the “dual tasks” in the ‘90s and the start of this century.

One misunderstanding the comrades seem to have is that the “dual tasks” means that it is our job to be the “best builders” of broader formations. That indeed is how they see the role of Marxists if they join DSA. But this was never the conception of the CWI when many of our sections were engaged in long-term entry work in social-democratic parties. Naturally, we took on certain responsibilities in these parties but we always continued to prioritize our own independent work. The discussion about the dual task stemmed from both organizational and political weaknesses of unions and workers’ organisations. Today, the “broad” part of the dual task in many countries is about initiating and participating in particular struggles together with others, organized and unorganized, to help strengthen the movements of workers, youth and the oppressed..

Of course in the unions - the core economic defense organizations of the class - and in the workplaces generally we do work intensively side by side with workers to win battles and to build broad oppositions to bureaucratized leaderships as well as build the unions themselves. But the emphasis on work in the labor movement while always an important task for a developing Marxist group is not always the top priority. In fact

SA is more engaged in work in the unions and workplaces today than at any point since the '90s, reflecting the changed situation and opportunities. But again it is very striking that Pat and Ty have essentially nothing to say about this key aspect of the dual tasks in our work today.

Assessing the Dual Tasks Today

There are two key differences between the situation today and that which prevailed in the '90s when the points on the dual tasks were first elaborated. These differences must be taken into account in assessing how we apply this concept to our work now. First of all, there have been important changes in consciousness, particularly in the wake of the '08-'09 economic crisis. We have seen a massive political polarization in the U.S. with a significant radicalization of sections of the working-class and especially young people. In the past couple years, beginning with the teachers' revolt and extending to struggles like the Stop and Shop strike and the UAW strike at GM, we have seen the beginnings of a redevelopment of the class struggle with the biggest strike wave in over 30 years.

This does not mean that the problems in consciousness and organization inherited from the '90s have been magically resolved. Far from it. But R&R and Pat and Ty give constant emphasis to the "low level of consciousness" generally or the "historically low levels of socialist consciousness and working-class political organization." This in our opinion is a one-sided view.

It is not just that there has been a significant change in consciousness, especially among young people, which is manifested in the Sanders' campaigns, the growth of DSA, the new wave of class struggle, the movements against oppression as well as the movement against climate catastrophe. It is the direction of developments, and specifically how consciousness is likely to change in the coming years.

We have explained in discussions and in material that the neoliberal era,

characterized by globalization, monetarist policies, and a relentless promotion of the "free market" is coming to an end under the hammer blows of the pandemic and the beginnings of a global economic depression. Neoliberalism which had lost almost all support outside the ruling class, particularly during the savage austerity following 2008-9, was already on its last legs. The global revolt last fall from Ecuador to Lebanon to Hong Kong directed at austerity and corruption was in reality a revolt against neoliberalism as the ISA has pointed out.

The period we are heading into will more resemble the 1930s and it represents, without a doubt, the deepest economic and social crisis for capitalism since World War II. This will lead to further political polarization and to even more generalized features of revolution and counter-revolution than in the past period.

In 1929, the labor movement in the U.S. was very weak objectively. The left organizations were also weak. All of that changed by the mid-1930s. Trotsky characterized the CIO as a "potentially revolutionary movement." Of course, there were important differences including the presence of a battle-hardened layer of radical trade unionists whose formative experiences included the mass radicalization of the early 1910s, World War I and the Russian Revolution. Despite the differences, consciousness will be transformed by the earth shattering events we are living through.

The Experience of the Irish Section

The other key question we must take into account in assessing the dual tasks today is the experience of our own international in applying this concept. This is a very important point that came out of the debate on the work of the Irish section which featured during the international dispute in 2019. In reality, the Irish section had the most extensive experience with leading mass struggles and significant electoral campaigns in our international since the British organization in the '80s and early '90s.

The successes of the Irish comrades in the last 25 years in this field were accomplished “against the grain,” given the weakness and retreat of the Irish labor movement and the very real complications due to the “low level of consciousness.” The Irish organization itself had a narrow cadre base and as the comrades themselves explained (see Members Bulletin 102, “Setting the Record Straight, Part 2”) the burdens of the mass work had led to a dangerous depoliticization in the party and, by the middle of the last decade, to the real danger of the liquidation of the revolutionary character of the organization. 36

Among other things, the Irish organization had established a broader political vehicle, Solidarity, which was a good initiative but did not flesh out in the way it was hoped. In reality it increasingly sucked up the organization’s resources and became a soft “outer shell” that threatened to subsume the building of the Socialist Party itself. Since 2015, the comrades have made huge strides in restoring the party to political health.

What is interesting is the similarity of the response of the old IS on the one hand and of Paul Murphy and the TTPF/RISE on the other to this question of the balance of the party’s work in Ireland. The old IS did not accept that there could be any question of not seizing each and every opportunity in the mass work no matter the consequences. The Irish comrades consistently sought their assistance in addressing the political dangers of ceaseless mass work to no avail. Then several years later, in 2018, the IS turned around, accused the Irish leadership of being a degenerated opportunist clique (“Mandelites”) and sought to drive them out.

Likewise Paul Murphy sees any such considerations as pointing to an “antipathy to mass work.”As the response of the Irish comrades to the resignation of TTPF/RISE [contained in this bulletin] states:

“Despite all the lip service to the Dual Task, the arguments of RISE point towards a single task: participate in broader formations and movements, all with the electoral field

and electoral gains as the fundamental priority – and as for the revolutionary party, sure, it will take care of itself in the future. Behind scattered revolutionary phrases and talk about the need for education, RISE clearly tends towards a loose approach politically and organisationally.”

False Approach on the Dual Tasks and the Transitional Method

So to return to the original point: the recent ISA World Congress, in discussing the question of the dual tasks, did conclude that there needs to be a reassessment, certainly not to abandon this concept but in order to take into account our recent experience as an international and the concrete circumstances we find ourselves in today which are very different to the 1990s.

Pat and Ty and R&R/RISE’s approach to the dual tasks rests on a non-dynamic, abstract, and ahistorical approach to the development of consciousness. Like Peter Taaffe they mainly emphasize the negative features and the complications. In reality the difference in the assessment of consciousness and the different methodological approach between the ISA and the R&R/RISE tendency has serious consequences.

Pat and Ty also accuse us of abandoning the transitional method in our work in favor of an “abstract propagandist” approach. But the transitional method, as Trotsky explained, is the attempt to build a programmatic bridge between the existing consciousness of the working class and the understanding of the need for the socialist transformation of society. The CWI, and now the ISA, unlike some other Trotskyist trends, always emphasized that this meant that the actual programmatic demands were not completely fixed. We do not put forward the same demands in the same way as the Fourth International did in the 1938 Transitional Program, written in the wake of the defeat of the Spanish Revolution and on the eve of World War II.

Likewise, small revolutionary organizations rarely address the entire working-class all at

once but first and foremost its advanced layer while seeking to demonstrate to that layer how they could engage the wider class. But starting from the idea of a “low level of consciousness” and then not taking into account the living dynamic in front of our eyes serves to justify a weak programmatic approach, in reality an opportunist approach.

Stephan, during his time on our Editorial Board, repeatedly argued against the idea that there existed a significant layer of young people and workers who were deeply hostile to the whole political establishment. He wanted our material to address the broader left (or barely left) liberal consciousness. Instead of relentlessly attacking the establishment of the Democratic Party (while reserving our strongest hostility for the Republicans) he felt we needed to tone things down to “what would be acceptable on the doors” in Seattle. Thankfully we didn’t take his advice but this seems to inform the approach of Pat and Ty and R&R. Events have demonstrated that, not only does this layer exist, it has grown substantially. It could be described as the “Bernie layer” though now it must move beyond Bernie.

In the past couple years, as we discussed at the March 2019 NC, we have begun to emphasize more prominently in our national material the demand for public ownership of specific sectors such as the pharmaceutical industry, the energy sector, and the banks while de-emphasizing a more general call to tax big business. This is not because there is anything wrong with calling for taxing big business obviously but the call for public ownership is a more developed demand which the emerging “advanced layer” is very open to. This allows us to begin the discussion at a higher level. This is in stark contrast to the situation 20 years ago or even 10 years ago when the demand for public ownership required very patient explanation.

In a different but parallel manner, in the 2019 election campaign in Seattle, addressing a much broader mass

audience, we were able to feature socialism far more explicitly than in any of our previous election campaigns. This also reflects the development of consciousness. But for Pat and Ty we assume all of this is just more evidence of our “abstract propagandist” approach and abandonment of the transitional method.

In truth, their genuinely abstract approach on how consciousness develops - divorced from the key objective developments - is connected to another even more problematic idea which is not fully spelled out. It is implied that mass consciousness changes primarily based on the “skillful” transitional approach of small groups and that this method can only be fully grasped by a tiny handful. Under certain conditions, relatively small organizations can help wider sections of the working class draw important conclusions as we did in Seattle with the Fight for 15, now in the fight for the Amazon tax, and as the Irish organization did during the abortion referendum in 2018. But even these examples are based on winning mass positions first.

This in no way of course minimizes the importance of training our members in the application of the transitional method but R&R fetishizes this as some groups in the past turned the understanding of dialectical materialism into a mystical doctrine. In the process these key concepts become lifeless and people draw false conclusions.

An excellent example of this was the fixation of the comrades who went on to form R&R, along with Pat and Ty, on impeachment from 2017 through 2019. They believed that somehow having the most “transitional” approach on this issue would help us reach a much wider audience. They also repeatedly argued that a move to impeach Trump would ignite mass protests on the streets, and that socialists would get a large echo in this “struggle.”

The EC agreed that supporting the call for impeachment, but on our own terms, was correct. But it could not be a central issue for us given that there was no real

movement in the streets and that concretely the Democrats were not going after Trump for his real crimes but rather for his alleged links to Russia and then the Ukraine issue which ordinary people did not care about. Our focus on the advanced layer who were far less interested in this question and not trying to primarily intersect broader liberal (and middle class) consciousness was borne out. We put our energy instead into the rising wave of class struggle which R&R largely ignored.

Democratic Centralism

We have sought in this document to bring into sharp relief the opportunist direction of Pat and Ty and the R&R/ RISE trend. There are many further points that could be developed. We would refer comrades, for example, to our comprehensive response to Pat and Ty's previous material on why SA should dissolve into DSA.

One of the things that stood out in Pat and Ty's arguments in that debate was their criticism of democratic centralism. Here is the key passage:

"In the light of the confusion and misunderstandings caused by so many bad experiences under the distorted banner of 'democratic centralism,' and the potential for these misunderstandings to be exploited by those who have wider political disagreements with us, our willingness to set this aside in the period ahead will remove an obstacle and allow our members to fully engage with the living socialist movement today, while boldly building a principled Marxist current."

This goes beyond simply trying to "remove an obstacle" to joining DSA and comes very close to saying there's something wrong with democratic centralism itself. Why is this a big deal? Democratic centralism is the form of organization that is best suited to a revolutionary organization. As Trotsky said, it is a "mobile balance" between open and wide-ranging debate, the lifeblood of any real revolutionary organization, and the ability to act decisively and collectively - if

necessary for a whole period - as we did in the reelection campaign in Seattle.

Contrary to Pat and Ty's suggestion that this "distorted banner" is an obstacle to reaching the advanced layer, it is our experience that many of the best people are attracted precisely by our ability to act as a disciplined unit after extensive discussion as we did in Seattle rather than be a perpetual "talking shop." In fact, a number of inactive DSA members who have entered into discussion with us over the past six months told us that a key reason for their frustration with DSA and interest in SA is precisely that we get things done, something that is difficult to do in DSA.

Pat and Ty never explained how we would have been able to conduct the ferocious political battle which ended in the defeat of the richest man in the world if we were a caucus in DSA. Nor for that matter did they explain how we would have been able to conduct our excellent interventions in the Oakland teachers' strike or the Stop & Shop strike in New England as a caucus in DSA. In reality, as we said earlier, we are wielding more influence on the best elements of DSA from the outside.

It is of course true that Stalinism, as well as a number of Trotskyist groups, gave democratic centralism a bad name in the past but Pat and Ty here point to an adaptation to the weaker sections or self-proclaimed leaders of the activist layer. Even more seriously they point to subsuming the political independence of the revolutionary movement - which must be jealously guarded - to a broader left reformist current. We predict the outcome will be less real democracy and less centralism.

In truth, the debate on Pat and Ty's proposal to dissolve into the DSA and the need to oppose these liquidationist arguments have proven a distraction from the necessary discussion on developing our concrete tactical approach to the DSA which we will have to return to in the coming months.

Pessimism

The approach to consciousness, the dual tasks, the transitional method as well as the move away from democratic centralism reflects a real pessimism about the capacity of the working class to rise to the challenge of history. It is also an adaptation to the backwardness of politics in the U.S. in the 1990s and 2000s which affects even the current radicalization.

To not argue for a broader, mass party of working people and instead call for a narrower Democratic Socialist Party also reflects a pessimism about what is possible. At the February NC, Pat repeatedly asked where the forces will come from to create a new mass party. At this point, with Sanders' capitulation, the path toward a new party is indeed temporarily blocked. But the groundwork is being laid for a huge leap forward in consciousness, with mass struggle against the attacks of the ruling class opening the way to the next step on the political plane. This will be at a higher level than the Bernie/AOC phenomenon. The DSA, or important sections of it, can play an important role in these developments but they will of necessity involve a much broader layer.

The Price of Admission

What is actually most shocking about Pat and Ty's statement, as we explained earlier, is their characterizations of the 2017-8 fight where they broke with Philip and Stephan to fight their rotten methods despite their political agreement with them on a range of issues. This was because of their continued loyalty to the CWI.

Based on the positions they have adopted, we can see the political logic of Pat and Ty joining forces with R&R. In fact, one could see this direction throughout the recent debate. Unfortunately for Pat and Ty, however, the price of admission to this group is to lie about the past and in fact to lie to themselves.

They have to pretend that the majority which they joined to oppose Philip and Stephan's reckless and destructive campaign was based on "distortions" of the positions of the minority. They now say they "regret" their participation in the "ferocious factional battle waged to drive the ex-minority out of Socialist Alternative." They essentially say that both sides behaved badly. We have seriously considered whether to bring out the extent of the rotten methods and "bad behavior" of the ex-minority which reflected their political degeneration. Pat and Ty are fully aware of these points, more aware than the vast majority of comrades. But as we said at the start we feel the key task here is to illuminate the underlying political issues.

The ex-minority faction's leadership which eventually formed R&R had a belligerent approach to debates, and a dismissive attitude toward the cadre of the organization. In Ty and the other comrades' resignation, they attempt to draw a "red thread" back to debates of the 1990s and early 2000s when the organization was around 100 members. This is incredibly strange and writes out of history the contribution of dozens of leaders and cadre who joined in the last 15 years. It also echoes a "great men of history" theory rather than the Bolshevik approach of building a collective working-class leadership.

While Socialist Alternative is accused of a "sectarian" approach, the definition of sectarianism is putting the narrow needs of an organization above those of the wider workers' movement. This is exactly what R&R did in leaking our internal debates to the class enemy at the beginning of our re-election campaign. These documents were cited repeatedly by our opponent and in the final mailers funded by Amazon executives. This is one of only many examples of this international trend valuing political expediency for their own forces above political clarity for the working class. Other examples include Paul Murphy's ongoing unprincipled bloc with Peter Taaffe's supporters in the recent international faction fight and the cynical maneuvering of Philip

and Stephan on the question of the police chief vote on Seattle City Council in 2018.(Members Bulletin 92)

On the one hand, Ty and Pat say that SA now has a “monolithic” leadership, and on the other hand they cite lively debate at the ISA’s founding World Congress as evidence of a lack of political clarity. Which one is it, comrades? The truth is that SA and ISA will continue to have ongoing debates and different points of view on many issues in our organization, the norm in any healthy democratic centralist organization.

Internationalism

Last but by no means least, we must comment on Pat and Ty’s attitude towards our international and internationalism in general. In the DSA debate, many NC comrades 39 were shocked at the lack of interest they displayed in the effect that formally dissolving our U.S. organization and formally renouncing democratic centralism would have on our refounded international especially given that it emerged in a struggle with forces who sought to usurp our democratic structures.

In our tradition, we do not see major decisions by key national sections as simply theirs alone; they are decisions that must involve the whole international. For us, building a healthy democratic centralist international is our key overall task helping prepare the ground for a mass revolutionary workers international.

While they might protest otherwise, Pat and Ty’s priority is no longer the building of an international in the sense that the CWI/ISA understands it. This doesn’t stop them having a lot to say about the deficiencies of the refounded international. Ty attended the ISA World Congress in late January as a delegate from the U.S. but conspicuously did not raise these points which are also part of the price of admission to R&R.

Pat and Ty echo R&R’s ridiculous assertion (for example in R&R’s April 2019 statement “Out of the Clear Blue Sky?”) that in the multi-sided conflict which broke out in the

wider CWI after the IEC at the end of 2018, the CWI majority did not really develop a cohesive political analysis of the roots of the problems in the organization. They cite an article by Danny Byrne in the second issue of our journal (“Continuing the Fight for International Socialism”) as proof. But this article, written in October 2019, was not meant to be a full summation of the lessons of the crisis but rather a public facing explanation of the importance and potential to build a revolutionary international in a period where there is actually growing internationalist sentiment among workers and especially young people.

Pat and Ty do not mention, for example, the document written by the IEC majority in May 2019 (Members Bulletin 110). This document develops elements of perspectives for the world economy and struggle as well as our differences with both the IS majority-led faction and Izquierda Revolucionaria on how to evaluate the development of consciousness, work in the unions, how Marxists should intervene in struggles against oppression and as well as the correct approach to building the international and an international leadership. Nor do they mention the more recent material in the International Bulletins that begin to deal with a deeper analysis of the debate.

But, to be clear, we do not think that the outcome of the struggle with Peter Taaffe and the IS majority, who – like Philip and Stephan – were in no way, shape or form interested in a “clarifying debate,” fully brought out the underlying issues. At the January World Congress, a resolution was passed to establish a commission to develop a wider discussion in the international on the roots of the crisis. The newly elected International Committee sees this as a very important task.

We see an underlying pattern in the R&R trend internationally. As explained earlier, Philip and Stephan’s group left before the 2018 convention declaring, “It is absolutely clear that there is no longer space for members of the Minority to democratically

influence the direction of SA. It does not make sense for us to continue to be a part of this charade with a predetermined outcome." Since then, R&R has repeatedly publicly claimed that they were expelled. In true sectarian fashion, they use this "expulsion" falsehood to bolster the reputation of their small group while damaging the wider workers movement and giving a weapon to our class enemies. In reality, they refused to debate at our convention and quit.

In Ireland, the Transform the Party Faction which became RISE likewise refused to participate in the party convention and dismissed the party membership in their resignation statement [included in this bulletin] saying "It's obvious to us that the majority of members are not open to hearing our views" after every opportunity to debate was given to them. And now Pat and Ty have refused to bring the debate which they began on DSA to the wider membership after we again offered to organize regional debates so that the widest possible section of the membership could hear both sides for themselves.

In all cases complaints are made about the lack of a sufficiently "democratic culture" to explain the outcome and cover over the reality that this trend lost the debate in the wider organization. In the case of Philip and Stephan they didn't even "debate" in the sense of meaningfully seeking to win a majority to their position while genuinely listening to the other side. This shows the hollowness of R&R's references to Lenin's willingness to be in a minority of one even for an extended period and to the dynamic internal life of the Bolsheviks. All comrades must be prepared to be at times in a majority and at times in a minority, based on their assessment of the debate at hand. This is an important aspect of membership in a democratic centralist organization.

The "international" R&R will build if they don't liquidate completely into a broader formation will have a "federalist" character, i.e. it will be more of a network where each component will be free to adapt to the

opportunist pressures of their own national terrain. The model for this is the United Secretariat of the Fourth International, the famous "Mandelites" we heard so much about from Peter Taaffe and co during the international dispute 40 last year.

We don't pretend, by the way, that the culture of debate in the organization is perfect; part of the problem is precisely that Philip and Stephan as well as the IS majority gave such stunningly bad examples of how to conduct debate that some in our ranks will incorrectly conclude that all disagreements must lead to splits. If this were the lesson drawn from the recent debates in the organization it would be a real tragedy. We aim to build an organization where comrades are, and genuinely feel, free to raise criticism of the organization and its current leadership's political direction. Through the course of discussion and debate, a majority opinion will be arrived at which is then acted upon.

We regret that Pat and Ty were not prepared to engage further in discussing how revolutionaries need to respond to the challenges of this new period within the framework of our international. We urge all branches to organize discussions on their resignation document and this response with the goal of an open and honest assessment of the points raised in both. These sorts of discussions and debates are crucial to the building of an organization with the political clarity and strength needed for the decisive tests which lie ahead.

Full list of available reading

Origins of the concept -

1. x Conclusion from Rise of Militant - 1994
2. x Our programme and transitional demands - 1995 (available upon request)
3. x Statement on the name - from name change debate - May 1996
4. x Peter Taaffe / Nick Wrack exchange on the name - July 96 (available upon request)
5. x "Reclaiming socialism- Militant Labour and the Socialist Labour Party" (1996- A Militant Labour Pamphlet) (available upon request)
6. x 7th World congress document - 1998

On development of New Left Formations

1. Feb 2007 - World congress re NWP's - <https://international-socialist.net/en/2007/02/our-activity>
2. Dec 2007- problems of building new parties(PT) - <https://international-socialist.net/en/2007/12/theory>
3. Aug 2008 - Europe, class struggle and left parties - <https://international-socialist.net/en/2008/08/our-activity-282>
4. Dec 2008 - Europe and Left Parties - <https://international-socialist.net/en/2008/12/our-activity>
5. April 2009.- Euro Bureau statement - <https://international-socialist.net/en/2009/04/europe>
6. Dec 2009 - IEC Statement - <https://www.socialist-alternative.org/2009/12/22/the-enduring-crisis-of-global-capitalism-political-social-and-environmental-consequences-and-tasks-of-the-workers-movement/>
7. Dec 2009 - IEC re Socialist Programme (PM) - <https://international-socialist.net/en/2009/12/our-activity-2>

8. July 2010 - Summer school report re new parties - <https://international-socialist.net/en/2010/07/our-activity-2>
9. Dec 2010 - World Congress report - <https://www.socialist-alternative.org/2010/12/16/cwi-10th-world-congress-europe-%c2%97-starkly-changed-economic-social-and-political-landscape-report-of-discussion-on-europe-at-the-10th-world-congress-of-the-cwi/>
10. Jan 2015 - Syriza forms gov - <https://www.socialist-alternative.org/2015/01/27/greece-syriza-power-ruling-parties-collapse/>
11. August 2015 - CWI school discussion report - <https://www.socialist-alternative.org/2015/08/13/new-left-formations/>
12. August 2015 - Corbyn movement - <https://www.socialist-alternative.org/2015/08/17/corbyn-challenge-britain-political-upheaval/>
13. July 2017 - Rise and fall of Syriza - <https://www.socialist-alternative.org/2017/07/07/rise-fall-syriza/>

From the dispute of 2018/2019 and aftermath-

1. Rebuilding the Working Class Movement & Forging a Revolutionary Party Today
2. US response to TM, PA etc - members bulletin 120
3. Setting in the record straight part 2 (available upon request)

Selected paragraphs from the World Perspectives Document -

<https://international-socialist.net/en/2021/03/world-perspectives>

- 1/ Struggles & Consciousness: The 2010's on Steroids - (27 paragraphs)
- 2/ Political polarization deepens - (5 paragraphs)
- 3/ New Left Formations - (23 paragraphs)

