

THE DERBY CONFERENCE OF THE I.L.P.

Easter, 1935

By HARRY POLLITT.

IN considering the results of the 43rd Conference of the Independent Labour Party held at Derby from April 20th to 23rd, it is perhaps useful and necessary to recall a few facts in regard to the rôle and evolution of the I.L.P. to its present position.

Prior to the Special Conference of the I.L.P. at Bradford in July, 1932, the I.L.P. had been the leader of reformism and the fight against Marxism in the working class movement for forty years.

It was the I.L.P. who were responsible for placing MacDonald in the position of Parliamentary leader of the Labour Party, and of becoming Labour's first Prime Minister, after which he promptly wiped his feet upon the I.L.P.

But the experiences of the General Strike, two Labour Governments, and the crisis in 1931 wrought great changes among the I.L.P. membership. At the special Bradford Conference in July, 1932, by 241 votes to 142, it was decided to disaffiliate from the Labour Party.

The minority promptly left the I.L.P. and formed the Socialist League, which continues the traditional I.L.P. rôle in the working class movement, under a pseudo-Marxist cloak.

The main cause of the disaffiliation policy carried out at Bradford, was not basic differences of policy, but disagreement with the Standing Orders of the Parliamentary Labour Party Group, which sought to impose a rigid discipline on all its affiliated sections. The I.L.P., in view of the growing disillusionment of the workers with the policy of the National Government, sought to retain the advantages of association with the Labour Party, without the disadvantages arising from the practical operation of Labour Party policy. We shall see later in this article, that this question of the Standing Orders of the Labour Party, is still playing its part in I.L.P. policy, and will in its relations with the Socialist League, assume some importance regarding future development between the I.L.P. and the Socialist League.

After the Bradford Conference a new Programme was adopted. Almost over-night, the world was informed that the I.L.P. had been transformed into a "revolutionary Marxist Party."

The step taken at that time was of great historical importance because of the previous rôle of the I.L.P.. Whilst appreciating this, it was also necessary to make the sharpest distinction between the genuine advance of the membership of the I.L.P. who were approaching towards Marxism and Communism, and the I.L.P. leaders. The latter,

after a life-time spent in preaching reformism, opposing Marxism, and practising every kind of reformist deception and trickery, under the pressure of their own members and by the force of circumstances, suddenly proclaimed their conversion to Marxism.

It soon became clear, that the "Marxism" only meant a means of manoeuvring to stem the advance of the members of the I.L.P. to Communism, and for the slandering of the Soviet Union and the Communist International. The events since July, 1932, culminating in the Derby Conference of April, 1935, have fully justified the analysis of the situation then made by the Communist Party of Great Britain.

At the Derby Conference held in 1933, the fight between the revolutionary members of the I.L.P. and the majority of the I.L.P. leaders became sharper. Important decisions were taken at this conference despite the opposition of the leaders and delegates associated with the Right Wing, still strongly entrenched within the I.L.P. The Conference saw the need for developing mass activity and making a sharper break with purely parliamentary methods of struggle. It realised the United Front was the central task, it broke off association with the Second International, and decided to approach the Communist International with a view to close co-operation.

These developments were the danger signal to the I.L.P. leaders. From that time on, the fight sharpened in the effort to prevent any further real attempts to develop the united front on the basis of day-to-day mass activity with the Communist Party, and for really effective co-operation with the C.I. It was realised that if these two decisive tasks were carried out, the logic of the position would be a single revolutionary Party in Britain affiliated to the Communist International.

At this Derby Conference, the revolutionary implications of the main questions, and especially that of the Communist International were blurred over. This provided the opportunities and excuses the leaders desired to impede any further progress in the development of the policy and influence of those sections of their membership who were associated with the Revolutionary Policy Committee.

The same revolutionary ferment was also expressing itself within the I.L.P. Guild of Youth, who were also in favour of a working agreement with the Young Communist International.

Comintern Letter to I.L.P.

The Communist Party and the Communist International warmly welcomed the Derby decisions, and in a letter sent to the I.L.P. by the Political Secretariat of the C.I. it was declared:

"The unity of all the revolutionary proletarian forces in Great Britain on the basis of irreconcilable class struggle, upon which the programme and tactic of the Communist International is founded, would be a turning point in the history of the British Labour Movement and would open up an international perspective for the revolutionary workers of the I.L.P."

This great aim, however, was the very last thing that either the open Right leaders led by Sandham, or the "left" leaders led by Maxton and Brockway desired. The Revolutionary Policy Committee, however, openly stated after the receipt of this letter from the C.I.:

"The C.I. had responded to the resolution passed at Derby, in a most friendly and conciliatory way. We must redouble our efforts to see that no unnecessary barrier is raised against this great advance towards international revolutionary unity." (R.P.C. Bulletin, No. 9, 1933.)

The Majority of the I.L.P. leaders certainly re-doubled their activities to prevent any further advance to Communism without a corresponding consistent drive through the I.L.P. as a whole (especially in Scotland where it was most needed) on the part of the revolutionary members of the I.L.P. By the time the York Conference of the I.L.P. took place in 1934, the three distinct political lines within the I.L.P. had become plain to every observer. The open Right Wing group, who were against the united front and any co-operation with the Communist International; the dominant group led by Maxton and Brockway, who tried to occupy a centre position and based their policy on that of the seven "left" socialist parties; and the members around the Revolutionary Policy Committee, who were fighting for the united front and those of the Affiliation Committee who were for sympathetic affiliation to the C.I.

After the York Conference, there was a further split in the I.L.P., and those members and branches who were under the leadership of Sandham and Murray, formed the Independent Socialist Party, whose main centre is in Lancashire, but which is a very small and ineffective organisation.

Again the issues became clearer. The fight between the leadership and revolutionary membership intensified. Two members of the Affiliation Committee who were in favour of the I.L.P. becoming an organisation sympathetically affiliated to the C.I. were expelled. At the same time, the leaders welcomed the formation of an avowed Trotskyist group within the I.L.P. to spread the type of political confusion and slander against the Soviet Union and the C.I., that would be useful to

the Maxton, Brockway group in their efforts to retard the growth of revolutionary influence within the I.L.P. moving towards Communism.

The I.L.P. Guild of Youth at its conference in Norwich in the summer of 1934, recorded a decision for sympathetic affiliation to the Young Communist International in spite of the opposition of the I.L.P. leaders. The National Administrative Council of the I.L.P. then called a special conference of the Guild of Youth with Brockway as its representative, to try and intimidate the Guild to rescind its decision. This was held in November, 1934, but again the Guild of Youth re-affirmed its decision for sympathetic affiliation to the Young Communist International.

And from this time it is easy to see the determination of the N.A.C. of the I.L.P. to stop any further flirtations with Communism, and lay aside the mask of platonic friendship that had on so many occasions been used to deceive its members and hide its real aims and policy.

It is necessary to briefly review here, the experiences in the united front activity carried on between the I.L.P. and the Communist Party since 1933. Without question there are many successes to record, and important achievements to register. Great activity has been carried out by the two parties in the fight against the National Government and the employers, fascism and war. Considerable sections of workers in the Trade Unions, Labour Party, and Co-operative Guilds have been drawn into this work.

Weakness of United Front.

But the outstanding weakness of the united front campaign has been that it has been limited constantly to certain specific campaigns. It was and is not based upon daily joint mass activity in the factories, trade unions and working class localities. This has been due to the fact, that within the I.L.P. leadership there was opposition to any form of united front with the Communist Party on the one hand, and to the fear that the I.L.P. would tend to lose its independent identity, in the united front on the other.

The practical result of this has been that the I.L.P. as a whole, has never been fully mobilised for united activity. Only in London, Glasgow, and certain parts of the Midlands has any sort of sustained joint activity been carried out.

Mistakes of a petty and isolated character have been made by some of our Communist locals. These have been magnified out of all proportion by those I.L.P. leaders who have been more interested in exploiting them to break the united front, than seriously trying to overcome political causes which have given rise to them.

The fight between the I.L.P. and the C.P. in

the Merthyr bye-election also added to the existing difficulties in any further development of united front activity. Every effort must be made to avoid rival candidates at elections in future.

The main drive and mobilisation of the workers through united front activity to develop a mass movement with its basis and support in the factories, trade unions, and streets has come from the Communist Party. Practically every proposal for mass work and suggestion for concrete demands and forms of mass activity has had to be made by the Communist Party. It has been a one-sided partnership in this respect. The proposals for united front activity have come from the Communist Party. The complaints arising out of this have come from the I.L.P. leaders. In addition to which, there have been strong tendencies, particularly expressed by Campbell Stephen, for the limitation of the united front to platform meetings and occasional demonstrations.

After the decision of the I.L.P. Guild of Youth last November to continue their association with the Y.C.I., our Central Committee received a letter from the I.L.P. demanding a new united front agreement, similar to the one existing between the French Socialist Party and the Communist Party of France.

We expressed our willingness to meet the I.L.P. representatives, but we also sent them a concrete proposal for a joint national conference to discuss the unification of the I.L.P. and the Communist Party into a united Communist Party.

Subsequently a meeting of representatives of the I.L.P. and C.P. was held. Many questions were discussed. We at once agreed to a new united front agreement on the lines of the French one, provided it also contained a clause, pledging both parties to repress any weaknesses in the work of the parties in carrying out the united front agreement. Since then many difficulties and differences have been cleared up. This year has undoubtedly seen many improvements in the carrying out of united front campaigns, especially in the fight against Part 2 of the new Unemployment Act. Of course, mistakes were made and weaknesses shown by both sides, but nothing that goodwill and discussion could not have cleared up. But these mistakes, taking place on the eve of the Annual Conference of the I.L.P. were the very thing certain of the I.L.P. leaders wanted, not only to oppose the whole aim and purpose of the united front, but as demagogic weapons for use against the perspective of complete unification and the formation of a united Communist Party.

At our recent 13th Party Congress, special attention was given to the question of the I.L.P. Maxton attended our Congress as fraternal delegate from the I.L.P. The proposal for a Unity

Conference between the two parties was enthusiastically endorsed. The declared policy of our Congress, that of doing everything possible to strengthen the fraternal relations between the two parties and the early realisation of a single revolutionary party was welcomed and supported by every delegate at the Party Congress.

Before and since our Party Congress, the Communist Party has been making great progress. Indications of this are over 2,000 new members, big increase of the Party in the trade unions, increase in the sale of the "Daily Worker," 10,000 copies of the Congress resolutions, and 40,000 copies of "Soviet Britain" sold. These facts, together with the success in the Urban District Council elections, especially in South Wales, have not escaped the notice of either I.L.P. leaders or members.

They are in such marked contrast to the well-known facts of the steady decline in the I.L.P. membership and influence.

This contrast has played an important part in the I.L.P. before and during their annual conference. At rockbottom it is these facts which rouse the wrath and anger of the McGoverns, and led to the old Tory diehard propaganda of "Moscow gold" and anti-Soviet slander being let loose; to the full applause of the yellow press, and the disgust of the more far-seeing and thoughtful members of the I.L.P.

What, of course, lies behind this resurrection of Lord Banbury's anti-Soviet propaganda, is the desire for an international in which the C.P.S.U. would have no place. Whatever the I.L.P. leaders say now to the contrary, it is becoming crystal clear that behind all their talk about "revolutionary unification of all international groupings," is the idea ultimately of a return to the Second International

In preparation for their last Derby Conference, the N.A.C. of the I.L.P. had prepared a Statement of Policy. We doubt if any policy statement has been issued by the leadership to which so many amendments have been presented in the history of any serious working-class political party. But the main thing to be noted in this regard is that no amendments came from Glasgow, the only place in the country to-day where the I.L.P. has any numerical strength and influence. This placed the N.A.C. in a very strong position for carrying through its political line. What was that line?

(1) To limit the United Front to specific issues, and day-to-day mass joint activity.

(2) To prevent any unification of the I.L.P. and the C.P. in a single revolutionary Party.

(3) To attack the Peace Policy of the Soviet Union.

(4) To retain association with the Seven Left Parties, as the best means of continuing the struggle against the Communist International.

(5) To side-track the Conference by the perspective of a new workers' party, which will turn out to be the means of effecting a return for the Labour Party.

There is no need, in this article, to go into any detailed analysis of the N.A.C. Statement of Policy already being prepared in the light of the amended version that emerged from the Congress. It will be enough to quote the opinions of the I.L.P. members themselves to show what this Statement represents.

The Revolutionary Policy Committee's Appraisal.

The Bulletin of the Revolutionary Policy Committee, issued in connection with the Derby Conference, states in reference to the Policy Statement as a whole,

"This is the only comprehensive Policy Statement issued by the N.A.C. since 1933, and we might therefore expect that such a statement would show a careful analysis of the present situation, arising from an understanding of the fundamentals that form the basis of what is often rather loosely termed Revolutionary Theory.

These fundamentals involve an understanding of the nature of capitalist production, the nature of state power and the function of state institutions, the process of the class struggle; the rôle of the working class and the dictatorship of the proletariat and the relation of the Revolutionary Party to the working class and its task in the revolution.

It is no exaggeration to say that in all these respects the document shows that the N.A.C. is content, consciously or unconsciously, to appear hopelessly muddled, and so quite unable to answer the questions it poses." (*Revolutionary Committee Bulletin, April, 1935.*)

There is no point in adding anything to this criticism. The whole character of the discussion bore out the correctness of this I.L.P. criticism of the I.L.P. leaders. To watch the antics of a few Trotskyists (not one of whom has a vestige of influence in any working-class organisation in the country) and how joyous the I.L.P. leaders were at others doing their dirty work, was an interesting study of that oft-lauded theme—"The I.L.P. Mind and Spirit."

But, of course, it was on the Peace Policy of the Soviet Union, that the Leaders and their supporters had their field-day. A field-day on which the coming months will reveal how much they have lost. After a few paragraphs in the Policy Statement on "The Danger of War," "Foreign Policy of Soviet Union," "Class Struggle must go on," we come to a paragraph which is headed "Defence of the Soviet Union," and read as follows:

"At the same time revolutionary Socialists must not be deterred from rallying to the defence of Soviet Russia if threatened with attack. The Soviet Union is the Socialist citadel in a hostile capitalist world, and must be defended at all costs."

But, already flushed with their "Victories" over the revolutionary delegates, and so dizzy with success, the N.A.C. proudly announced their withdrawal of the sentence "The Soviet Union is the

Socialist Citadel in a hostile Capitalist world and must be defended at all costs." No wonder the delegate Hilda Vernon declared this as "Extremely significant."

"Why," she asked, "has the sentence been withdrawn, a sentence representing the view we have held of the U.S.S.R. since 1917?"

Comrade Hilda Vernon had already supplied the answer to her own question, in her article written before the Derby Conference, where in dealing with Brockway's notorious Anti-Soviet article she had declared:

"Why does Fenner Brockway find it necessary always to be criticising the Soviet Union—always finding some fault to magnify for the edification of the workers of this country?

We believe it is because Brockway, by reason of his bitter hatred of the C.I. and the C.P.G.B. has allowed his judgment to become warped on any matter that, if dealt with in a more friendly way, would bring the Party closer to the C.I. and C.P.G.B. and further away from the 'Left' revolutionisation of Brockway's friends of the Resisters' International and 'Left'-Trotskyist-Bureau."

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"The recent articles in the *New Leader* by Fenner Brockway on the Soviet Union now display clearly the attitude that will be forced on to the Party as a result of its relations with the Paris Bureau.

We cannot allow the I.L.P. to be drawn into becoming a predominantly anti-Communist 'anti-Soviet Union' organisation, under the disguise of the honest Socialist having to answer the honest doubts of the workers. This attitude does not answer them—it feeds them and soon may be in the position of creating them." (*Revolutionary Policy Committee Bulletin, April, 1935.*)

It is always a favourite trick of the I.L.P. leaders to compare the democracy of the I.L.P. with the terribly dictatorial methods of the Communist Party. But it appears that when Comrade Jack Gaster, one of the Revolutionary Policy Committee leaders, and a member of the N.A.C. of the I.L.P., wrote an article criticising Brockway's anti-Soviet line in the "New Leader" of April 5th, this article was rejected on the grounds that:

"Comrade Gaster's article would be interpreted inside and outside the Party as opposition to the line contained in Brockway's article on April 5th and the leader of April 12th—which the Inner E.C. has endorsed." (*Revolutionary Police Committee Bulletin, April, 1935.*)

There was nothing the majority of the I.L.P. leaders wouldn't do, to ensure Brockway's line consideration. Some comment was made on Brockway's silence, in the Conference, on what is regarded as his special preserve. We understand that this modesty was to prove to the I.L.P. that the N.A.C. were behind him. It certainly proved it as far as the majority of the leaders were concerned.

We have heard remarks about some of the anti-Soviet expressions used by McGovern and Campbell Stephen as "unfortunate—but made in the heat of the moment." Not at all. The position was exquisitely explained by Maxton, who, faced

with angry delegates demanding to know if the statements made by McGovern and Stephen, expressed the opinions of the N.A.C., declared in the famous Maxton manner that "He wished they would be as discreet as himself." So it is clear, from the Chairman of the I.L.P. that what is blurted out by certain I.L.P. leaders is in the thoughts of the majority.

We believe, however, that the resolution put forward by the Derby branch of the I.L.P., in relation to the Soviet Union more correctly expresses the views of the I.L.P. membership as a whole, even though it was defeated. This resolution reads as follows:

"This Conference congratulates the U.S.S.R. on its tremendous achievements in the sphere of Socialist planning and construction. The Conference is of opinion that if the Soviet Union is given the opportunity to continue its work without interruption by capitalist aggression it will soon achieve a classless order of society. The Conference welcomes the peace policy pursued by the Soviet Union and recognises that such a policy is in the best interests of the working class throughout the world.

We regret that the forces of the working class throughout the world are not as yet prepared for vital struggle. We realise, therefore, that the Soviet Union's policy allows for more time for the preparation and consolidation of the working class forces.

Finally, this Conference notes that at the same time as Socialist construction is increasing, capitalist decay is increasing. Therefore, with every month the U.S.S.R. has for construction, the strength of the Socialist movement is increasing, not only in Russia, but throughout the world."

I.L.P. Members Behind Soviet Union.

The above accurately reflects the views of the vast majority of the British working class. We have no doubt at all that there will be a strong movement inside the I.L.P. against the vicious anti-Soviet policy, its leaders managed to get adopted at Derby. All the fancy phrases and beating of breast by Jennie Lee on behalf of the N.A.C. about how they will defend the Soviet Union, cannot hide the fact that the majority of the N.A.C. at Derby were playing the game of the counter-revolutionaries, a game which has for its object the destruction of the Soviet Union. But they will fail, because the British workers and all that is best in the I.L.P. are solid behind the Soviet Union, and welcome its Peace Policy as the greatest contribution to preventing war in our time.

I was present at the Derby Conference as a fraternal delegate of the Communist Party. It needs to be explained, that I was allowed only ten minutes to convey the message of the Communist Party, and had to do so immediately the Conference opened. In the course of my speech I stated:

"The Thirteenth Congress of the Communist Party deputed me to carry to the forty-third Conference of the Independent Labour Party warmest fraternal greetings and to express the hope that within a short space of time

the complete unification of our two Parties will be realised.

For the first time in the history of either the I.L.P. or the Communist Party, this year has seen an exchange of fraternal delegates at our respective Party Congresses. It is both an indication of the changed economic and political situation, and of the relations between the two Parties arising from this.

We believe the united front activity that has been carried out between the I.L.P. and the Communist Party, is of historic importance, not only because of what has been achieved through this for the British workers, but the effect it has had throughout the international labour movement.

It was perhaps inevitable, in view of our previous relations, that there should have been certain shortcomings and weaknesses in our joint work, but we should set ourselves to overcome them. However, really big things have been accomplished and a new hope given to large sections of the British working class movement. Whatever differences, distrust and suspicion there may have been, whatever political differences on fundamental questions of revolutionary theory and practice have existed, our joint activity in support of the German, Austrian and Spanish workers, the great Hunger March and National Congress of 1934, the militant fight against war and fascism, especially the successful mass struggles against Mosley's Blackshirts, the mass fight against Part 2 of the Unemployment Act, are great achievements, which have rallied tens of thousands of workers into united activity, and had a profound effect inside the trade unions, the Labour Party and the Socialist League and Labour League of Youth as the growing opposition to the official policy within these organisations proves.

But, because of the grave character of the present situation at home and abroad, we cannot be satisfied with these undoubted achievements. There are still millions of workers under the influence of the reformist leaders, and who have not yet been drawn into active participation in the united front.

The British Labour leaders to-day are the chief opponents of the united front, both on a national and international scale. They have opposed the acceptance of the appeal for united action made by the Communist International to the Second International. They have opposed the appeal for international trade union unity made by the Red International of Labour Unions to the International Federation of Trade Unions. They are opposed to any form of class struggle that undermines their avowed policy of class co-operation, and unless we can break down this resistance by our consistent day-to-day activity in the factories, trade unions, and working class localities, by our joint activity, continually drawing in wider sections of their rank and file, the British working class may experience serious set-backs and defeats.

The Communist Party is confident that we can win the workers in the Labour Party, Trade Unions and Co-operatives, and in so doing force their leaders to change their present opposition to the united front.

The fighting united front of the working class can only have real meaning if it is developed as a result of daily activity against the attacks of capital and against fascism and war.

If we have a common policy on the trades unions, effective preparation for the winning of all elective posts and for the various trade union conferences, for the unification of the wages demands and preparations for economic struggles; a common policy for the Trade Councils, for work in the Co-operatives, for work amongst the unemployed and building up a mass N.U.W.M., by our joint fractions and panels of candidates, in all these activities we can help the employed and unemployed workers secure great victories.

If alongside these we can work out an agreement for an election policy, that will by our joint activity result in the return of a strong revolutionary group in the next Parliament, and help forward the growing opposition within the Labour Party itself, then a new perspective opens for the whole working class, and for our two Parties.

It strengthens the necessity for the complete unification of our two Parties in a single revolutionary Party. We believe this great aim transcends in importance every other issue before your present Conference. We have noted and welcomed the growing tendencies within the I.L.P. towards Communism and the Communist International.

You all know where the Communist Party stands on this question. Our recent Thirteenth Party Congress declared:—

‘The fight for the united front, and the ever more revolutionary issues facing the working class struggles, make to-day more urgent than ever before the unity of all militant workers in a single revolutionary party on the basis of Marxism-Leninism. With this aim in view the Communist Party has proposed to the Independent Labour Party the holding of a joint Congress for the formation of a United Communist Party.’

We believe the programme and policy of the Communist International, to which our Party is proud to be affiliated, is the only one to which revolutionary workers can subscribe. We are convinced that for such workers there is no other alternative, neither is there a middle course between the Second and Third Internationals, and attempts to find one may easily result in not going forward to revolution, but back to reformism.

The Communist International—the International created by Lenin—has for the first time in history created a World Revolutionary Party, uniting and leading the activities of revolutionary workers and peasants in every country in the world. It is the International to which the Communist Party of the Soviet Union is affiliated, the Party building Socialist construction in a way that has resulted in the Soviet Union becoming one of the most powerful countries in the world and whose Peace Policy has won unstinted support of every genuine lover of peace and hater of war, who recognise in this Peace Policy the unswerving determination of the Soviet Union to prevent and retard war and thus give the workers of the world a breathing space in which to complete their preparations not only to effectively fight war, but to carry through the revolutionary struggle for power.

The creation of a single revolutionary Party in Britain based upon the programme of the Communist International and firmly and wholeheartedly supporting the Soviet Union, especially its Peace Policy, will not only result in a tremendous strengthening of the revolutionary forces in Britain, but will at once result in thousands of unattached revolutionary workers at present outside the ranks of the I.L.P. and the C.P. joining up and bringing further force and power to our United Party.

The unity of action on immediate issues must be strengthened, in addition we believe, that if joint meetings of the representatives and memberships of both Parties in every area were regularly taking place, discussing not only immediate issues connected with the united front, but the fundamental revolutionary questions, associated with the development of the struggles for power, this would mark a very big advance in all phases of our current work and towards the unification of our two Parties.

The Communist Party is ready and willing to meet your representatives to discuss the practical measures to be taken to achieve this great aim—the creation of a mass United Communist Party in Britain affiliated to the Communist International.”

Immediately after I had concluded, Maxton gave his Chairman’s address, the only noteworthy point being where he stated:

“I cannot say that I feel, as Pollitt has expressed it, that we are ready for unification of the Independent Labour Party and the Communist Party. But I do feel that already things are shaping so that the possibility of the formation of a new working class party in this land with the I.L.P. and the Communist Party as its central core is not in the far distant future, but very near to us.” (Maxton at I.L.P. Conference, 20.4.35.)

We consider it very important that this avowed aim of creating a new Workers’ Party has been declared. That it is the aim of the N.A.C. of the I.L.P. also, is made clear in the leading article of the *New Leader* on April 26th, 1935, where it states:

“It sets out to form a new Workers’ Party in which all the growing revolutionary forces of the working class will be combined.” (Editorial, *New Leader*, 26.4.35.)

New “Workers’ Party a Trap.

The “New Workers’ Party” is to be the red herring across the path of those who sincerely desire to see the complete unification of the whole of the revolutionary workers on the basis of a Marxist-Leninist Revolutionary Programme and Policy.

There cannot be any opportunist unification. There can be no possibility of some *ad hoc** Workers’ Party, each Party to which has its separate political programme and policy.

The United Front of struggle against the attitude of the employers and National Government, against Fascism and War, provides the basis for united activity and co-operation, into which every section of the working class movement can be drawn.

The Labour Party and The Socialist League have a programme and policy, which is one of Reformism.

The Communist Party has a programme and policy. It is based upon the interests of the working class and the carrying through of a revolution, the establishment of the dictatorship of the working class and of Soviet Power.

Between these two clearly defined programmes of Reformism and Revolution there is no half-way house. Finally, the issue before every worker is one or the other.

False notions and illusions about the possibility of harmonising conflicting views, of romantic revolutionising, of uniting into a new workers political party, various sections of workers without a clearly defined Marxist-Leninist Programme and Policy may sound specious and attractive, and seem to fit in with our “peculiar British traditions and conditions.” Fundamentally it is not only

* For this particular purpose, especially.

dangerous because it retards the advance to Communism, but finally leads back direct into the camp of reformism.

The N.A.C. have not outlined the basis and programme on which the proposed new Workers' Party would be established as yet. But the whole line of the Derby Conference decisions reveals the probable approach. It is obvious that such a Workers' Party would be asked to accept:

(1) A programme of "Left" Socialist muddle-headed reformism.

(2) Opposition to the Peace Policy of the Soviet Union.

(3) Either no international associations at all; or association with a group of "Left" parties, largely comprised of renegades from Communism, whose false policy has been exposed by events, and who have only one common link, hatred of the Soviet Union and the Communist International.

As the situation develops, this line will be found to be the cover for leading the I.L.P. step by step to the Labour Party. The proposal of the I.L.P. to the Labour Candidate in the Perth bye-election, for giving support on condition that he oppose the existing Standing Orders of the Labour Party is no accident. The appeal of certain members of the Socialist League to I.L.P. leaders, and the Editorial of the "Daily Herald," after the Derby Conference, appealing to certain sections of the I.L.P. to return to the Labour Party fold, are all intimately connected. The basis on which the Bradford Conference of the I.L.P. disaffiliated, is neither forgotten, nor is it likely to be an inseparable barrier for a later family reunion.

We make it clear. We are absolutely against Maxton's idea of a Workers' Party, which is to be the alternative to a united Communist Party. There is no place for the kind of loose workers' Party comprising all sorts of affiliated organisations that Maxton has in mind. We are for a Workers' Party as visualised by Lenin, a Party of Revolutionary Working men and women firmly moulded on revolutionary theory and practice, affiliated to the Communist International.

To-day this Party already exists in Britain, it is the Communist Party. There is no half-way house between the Labour Party and the Communist Party. There is none between the Second International and the Communist International.

The real issue before the I.L.P. is now as clear as daylight. It is either forward to Revolution—or back to Reformism.

The majority of the N.A.C. leaders have shown where they stand.

It is now this issue which faces every member of the I.L.P. The gauntlet has been thrown down by the leaders, it has to be challenged, exposed and fought against, otherwise there is no future before the members of the I.L.P.

It has been very revealing to note the summing up of the Derby Conference of the I.L.P., by the more responsible sections of the Capitalist Press. We have only space to give two views:

"The Communists would not play the I.L.P. game with the result that in 1935 Mr. McGovern got on his feet at Derby and talked about Russian gold in almost the same terms used by Lord Banbury fifteen years ago.

The I.L.P. may drag on for another year or two, but no one will bother about it any more. It is dried and done for, and only the personality of Mr. Maxton gives a look of life to the bones." (*News-Chronicle*, 25.4.35.)

"This prediction of something less dignified than death was not difficult to make. We cannot but feel that among the best elements of the I.L.P., the catastrophic error of 1931 is now fully and bitterly realised. And we cherish the hope yet that they will rejoin the Labour Movement and give their best to it.

The Derby Conference has made plain that there is no possibility of co-operation between the Labour Party and the members of the I.L.P., who dabble in revolutionary slogans and do not seem to know whether they are democrats or not.

There are others than such in the I.L.P. and it is to these that we suggest that rejoining the Labour Party is the only condition upon which the restoration of their political influence is possible." (*Daily Herald*, 24.5.35.)

Tasks of the R.P.C.

Our view is that if the revolutionary members of the I.L.P. now fearlessly face the fundamental issue that the Derby Conference has raised, which is forward to a united Communist Party affiliated to the Communist International; or decay and disintegration of the I.L.P. until finally the remnants make their peace with the Labour Party and return to the camp of Reformism, there is great hope for the future.

But it means an open fight. It means closer active association with the Communist Party, joint membership meetings to discuss the fundamental questions of the revolution, utilising press and platform for carrying on the fight against the Derby decisions and policy.

It means making contacts all over the country by personal visitation, by gaining a mass circulation for the R.P.C. Bulletin, ending the tactical manoeuvring to out-manoeuvre those whose lifetime has been spent in Parliamentary manoeuvring and expediency.

It means bold and open popularisation of the Soviet Union, its Peace Policy and rôle as the fortress of the world revolution. It entails full support for the Programme and Policy of the Communist International and for the 21-Points of the C.I.

It will be a hard struggle. Every latitude and facility will be given inside the I.L.P. to the poisonous vapourings of a few nondescript Trotskyists, but the class struggle will sharpen, the battle for a revolutionary unification will continue and gather strength.

The members of the Revolutionary Policy Committee need to ponder the fact that they have little influence and authority outside London. The only mass basis of the I.L.P. is in Glasgow. That is where the future struggle lies and needs to be carried out. In carrying it out many comrades will be amazed at the fundamentally reactionary character of the ideas propagated by some of the Glasgow leaders, the logical development of which is back to the Labour Party.

The ideological struggle within the I.L.P. has still to be fought out in Glasgow. When it is undertaken seriously not Moscow, but Rome will be found to be the main obstacle to the creation of a united revolutionary Party affiliated to the Communist International. The leaders of the fight against Communism, will be found to be those who, while privately holding anti-religious views, are not prepared to fight for Parliamentary and Municipal positions on a clear-cut revolutionary political line, for fear of losing the support of masses still under reactionary religious influences

But the Communist Party, too, has serious responsibilities.

In carrying out the united front activities an end must be put to mistakes and tactics that estrange I.L.P. workers who are taking full part in the fight. We don't take part in the united front for separate Party aims, but for the strengthening of the whole working class fight. We work in comradesly association with all workers, and their organisations, aiming at a common division of work, leadership and responsibility. We also have to carry out much more effective propaganda and explanation of our Party aims and programme. We must explain the Soviet Union's Peace Policy, and the magnificent work being

carried out by the Communist International and its affiliated sections all over the world. The members of the Communist Party should cultivate the most comradesly relations with I.L.P. members, exchanging common experiences, working together for common aims in the factories, trade union branch, and co-operative guilds, in the trades councils, and amongst the unemployed. Political discussion must ensue on current events, and fundamental revolutionary questions. There is now a great wealth of revolutionary literature, that can be made the basis of common study, and is invaluable in helping to explain the political meaning of the Derby Conference decisions for example. Only by such methods can we break down existing barriers, sweeping away every existing suspicion and distrust and proving our sincerity, seriousness and determination, not only to strengthen the mass movement through united front activity, but of helping forward the struggle against those who stand in the way of uniting the revolutionary forces in this country into a united Communist Party affiliated to the Communist International.

Finally, I could not help contrasting the recent Thirteenth Congress of the Communist Party held in Manchester with the Derby Conference of the I.L.P.

In the former unity behind a political line; great mass experiences, life and enthusiasm, confidence and pride in the Party. In the latter disunity, lack of faith in the working class, no clear line that unites the whole Party, no enthusiasm and no pride in the Party.

It is the difference between advancing Communism and trying to have a foot in each camp, reformist and revolutionary.

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