

REPLY TO DB.

DB's criticism of my style of inner party struggle betrays two main features: lack of investigation before speaking, and unsupported assertions mixed with gross factual inaccuracies. Guided by a consistent sectarianism in his own method of inner party struggle he reveals his own lack of experience which would not be criticised if it were not fuelled by a considerable degree of arrogance.

He states that I have presented arguments to another group in the CFB not available to London comrades, raises the charge of 'factionalism' and using "his position of Secretary to undermine".."the official line of the Federation". In fact he is referring to my "Social Democracy: Draft Working Line on Elections" produced in October 1973, circulated to all CFB group representatives and to all members of the London study group on Social Democracy and thus presumably to DB himself. Even if DB cannot be expected to remember material introduced into a recent study class, a simple question to me would have prevented him from circulating such foolish allegations, even if it had meant him 'festering' for 24 hours.

On the September 12th meeting my method of debate on the Election is said to be 'vague', 'ambiguous' albeit eloquent', 'liberal' and 'diffuse'. Considering his absence from this meeting this is a remarkable list of adjectives which unsurprisingly he finds it impossible to support.

Moving swiftly on to the January 1972 GM on Socialist countries' foreign policy, he again comments in detail on a meeting which he did not attend: he was not even a member as I recall. He says that I should have drawn a clear line of demarcation at this meeting and ensured a majority and a minority. Up until now I had thought that DB thought the resolution to be correct and clear. The then Committee urged the groups to discuss and study it, together with the recommended reading list and ~~list~~ accompanying quotations. They were asked to prepare any necessary amendments, but none appeared. After two days of detailed discussion the resolution was passed unanimously. DB fails to say what I should have done to ensure that people opposed the resolution. Groups had not prepared and some were in a position of unease about the subject which neither I nor DB nor anyone else has managed to get them to define. But he insists that I should confront an erroneous line although it was not expressed. As so often he contents himself with grand general revolutionary phrases while avoiding 'the concrete study of concrete conditions, the living soul of

marxism'. The meeting went on to agree that there were certain questions that should be raised with the CCP and that until that time any debate around these should remain internal. What happened in the next year is described in my statement to the January 1973 GM. Both at that meeting and at the last SGM when the same questions were debated I believe that I confronted the Majority incorrect line 'clearly' and 'frontally'. I challenge DB to assert anything to the contrary. If he believes that I did ~~he~~ act at these meetings in a principled way what is the validity of his whole argument? It should be noted that DB's own diversionary tactic at the '73 meeting, in trying to move a motion calling for the resignation of ~~ME~~as MLQ Editor was correctly and ~~as~~ completely rejected by the London group. At both of these meetings, with that ~~x~~ exception, the unity of the the London group stood as 'firm', 'with hardly a waver' as that achieved by the same correct methods of principled struggle in the recent Ireland GM.

As to the social democracy classes, the group agreed that the purpose of the classes was not as DB asserts to decide a clear line on voting Labour. He need only to look at the agreed syllabus to determine that. It was to examine the development of social democratic ideology, assess its present influence and see how to counter and destroy it; a much wider and more important question. The classes contained a large number of non-members including almost all of the ~~pr~~ now LCG and thus could not be used to decide a line. Several times I did argue against reaching a 'clear conclusion', but as that was in the early stages with several more classes to go it seemed reasonable. If DB had wanted a 'clear conclusion' well before the study had been completed he should have said so and borne the resulting ridicule.

On the 'disengagers', DB does not quote any specific examples, so his assertions are difficult to evaluate. In attempting to convey a political line there are always tactical questions as to the best way to express it and convince people. None of my proposed amendments retreated in principle: they were aimed at communicating that principle effectively to the CFB. We are, after all, in the business of changing the world, and if we don't change peoples minds and actions we will merely become yet another self-righteous clique. The only specific point that DB makes is that "in a very literal and precise sense" their documents were 'Menshevik'. Should we not then have stated that in the letter, or did we think that our principled criticisms would not be served by such a description at that time to that particular audience?

He ends by attacking my 'non-leadership' of the CFB, of 'wriggling like a snake' and so on. There have been occasions when I was not sufficiently outspoken against incorrect policies, though not as I have said on major questions facing the CFB. I may well have made such an error about HR, but DB omits to point out that the fact was that the majority of those who had worked with her supported her candidature and that his only criticism of her ^{was} that she was 'slippery'. While that was also my impression it hardly seemed good enough to counteract those who had worked with her: I at the time had met her twice. I intend no humour when I say that at the comparable time in my knowledge of DB I thought that he might tend towards arrogance and impetuosity. It was only when I was ^{more} confident of that criticism that I expressed it ^{to} him and the group.

As for the extension of candidature of the 6, the reasons were honest, correct and sufficient for the decision made. I challenge DB to ~~show~~ show that ~~they~~ he ever believed that they were not. In fact his assertions that the reasons given were 'technical' is one of his most astounding. If he believes that lack of collective work, lack of effective leadership, and political disagreement with the line of the group in the pre-SGM discussion are 'technical' reasons, then his Marxism is as far from mine as is the ICG's. Why he should start adopting their arguments, if fail to understand.

DB's anger may have some justification if he was not informed that the September 12th meeting was to decide Election policy. It was my belief that people had come expecting the debate and certainly this should have been the case, even if, as I believe, it would have made no difference to the final result. However any lack of notification is hardly my responsibility.

But this anger in no way justifies irresponsible, unfounded, hasty and sectarian attacks. While these are characteristic of a large number of leftist sects they cannot be tolerated in the CFB, still less when the London group has such heavy and serious responsibilities as it has at the present time.

This is no idle exchange where DB's moralising about 'feelings', enjoyment, being 'hurt' and so on, can mislead anyone into thinking that he can attain the comfortable position as London's professional cold shower, or that he should be tolerated in his eccentricities.

Such a potentially damaging attack based on falsehoods, assertions and ignorant speculation must be severely censured by the London group and the comrade must be given help to return to a useful role in the group where his undoubted talents can help rather than hinder our work.