WORKERS POWER

Teachers Bulletin for Special Conference June 1988

BUILD A RANK 'N' FILE MOVEMENT

THE DECISIONS TAKEN at today's special conference will have a wide ranging and long lasting effect. The Executive will claim that because of a drop in membership the Union's finances are in bad shape. They will also have the cheek to suggest that the reorganisation will strengthen the Union!

In fact the real issue is - which way forward for the Union? Behind the Executive's smokescreen of finances and reorganisation is an attempt to completely alter the nature of the NUT. The new realists in the leadership have decided that the Union must shed any vestige of class struggle and become a tame 'credit card' union, simply offering services and advice to its members.

The undemocratic nature of the Broad Left leadership has already been totally exposed. Without any consultation they have changed the logo and virtually destroyed our Union journal. (How much they care about strengthening union groups is shown by the fact that one copy of the *Teacher* goes to the staff room and the other to, of course, **the Head**. NUT members don't get a look-in.) With this track record can anyone really believe that the proposals on offer will any way strengthen or democratise the union?

In fact all of the Executive's changes will actively undermine local association's independent activity and place all power in the hands of a bureaucratic and secretive clique - the Policy and Resources Committee. The most obvious example of this is the central collection of subs. Although the Executive state that they will still allocate resources to Local Associations the potential for refusing to fund areas that won't tow the line (eg ILTA) is obvious.

Similarly the increasing reliance on paid officials in negotiations with LEAs will detract from the ability of local officers to represent the views of their members. Clearly these unelected and unaccountable officials will parrot the line of their paymasters in the Executive and not put forward the wishes of the local membership.

However **WORKERS POWER** does not believe that what is necessary is a defence of 'democracy' in abstract. Of course we are in favour of a more democratic Union, but it must be recognised that the current proposals represent a **political attack.** For this reason it is essential that in combating the Executive's strategy the left must itself go on the offensive. Arguing for the status quo, or slight variations on it is just not good enough. Militants must use the opportunity to argue the case for real democracy and the best way to strengthen local associations.

This would then lay the basis for a genuine rank and file movement which could wrest control of the Union out of the hands of the present class collaborationist leadership. Such a movement must take up the following demands:

*** Abolish Rule 8, for full local association autonomy. School groups to be the base units of the NUT.**

*** All officials to be elected and recallable and paid the average teacher's salary.**

*** Full support for all workers in struggle, no crossing of picket line.**

*** Defend lesbian and gay rights, defy Clause 28.**

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