

Australasian

# Spartacist



Number three 3 November 1973

## IMPORTED LABOUR -- ITS REVOLUTIONARY ROLE

Of the thirteen million people who live in Australia two and a half million were born overseas. This includes about 700,000 non-English speaking assisted immigrants who have arrived since the Second World War. These non-English speaking migrants perform a very important job in capitalist society. They have been an instrument to allow Australian capitalism to keep its rate of surplus value very high and thus have been a most significant element in the tremendous capitalist expansion since the War.

### Super-Oppression of Migrants, Blacks and Women

Migrants, along with Blacks and women, hold the worst jobs with the lowest rates of pay in this country, are the most often unemployed, and are the most oppressed section of the working class. Because migrants are concentrated in language groups and because they are divided from the rest of the class by their cultural differences they have not traditionally played a large role in the working class movement. Indeed it is only because they have been divided off from their English-speaking class brothers that capitalism has been able to get away with their high rate of exploitation.

The Australian bourgeoisie consciously aids anti-migrant attitudes. At times of high unemployment the contest for jobs results in chauvinist reaction in the Australian working class. Prejudiced attitudes, whether towards migrants, Blacks or women, must be exposed as baseless and weakening to the strength of working-class unity.

Migrant women are employed on the whole in the lowest paid jobs in the female labour market. The extremely strong allegiance to the family, inherent in many of the migrants' cultural backgrounds, inhibits these women (even more than indigenous women) from being as militant as their male counterparts. They feel unable to fight for better wages, working conditions, language-learning facilities, union representation or child care.

### Migrant Militancy and Communist Politics

The isolation of migrants from the working class which the bourgeoisie wishes to maintain, can never be complete. As the strike at Ford's plant in Broadmeadows, Melbourne last June demonstrated, their great burden of oppression can lead normally passive migrants to massive outbursts of spontaneous militancy which puts them out in front of the class. So the section of the working class which has been most profitable to the Australian bourgeoisie threatens also to be the most dangerous section of the class.

The militancy of migrant workers has been spasmodic and instinctive rather than informed by a programme capable of carrying through the struggle to the fulfillment of the needs of migrants as the most oppressed section of the working class. Indeed, migrant militancy is based on negative qualities: their lack of ties to Australian society and the working class movement - in some cases even an aspiration simply to get out of the working class as quickly as possible to set up their own businesses. Therefore, if militancy is to fulfill its proper historical role the migrant section of the working class must be won to revolutionary consciousness despite the great obstacles to this, the transformation of the most combative foreign workers into a genuine communist vanguard layer. This can only be done through a relentless struggle for a programme which makes the transition between the level of politics in the working class today and revolutionary politics.

The end to the oppression and exploitation which is felt most severely by migrant workers can come about only through proletarian revolution. The central tactic in fighting for an understanding of this in the working class lies in building a party with fractions within the trade unions based around a programme of demands which stem from today's consciousness and the need felt by wide layers of the working class today, yet leading unalterably to revolutionary consciousness and to the mobilisation of struggle which challenges capitalism.

### Bureaucracy's Attempt to Control Migrant Militancy

The English-speaking working class is tamed by its organisations under the misleadership of the Australian Labor Party and the Communist Party. These misleaderships divert the struggles of the working class along relatively harmless paths. The militancy of migrants is not channelled in this way, and this is why such events as the Broadmeadows strike occur. Laurie Carmichael of the CPA did his damndest to smash that strike after having been taken completely by surprise at the militancy of the migrants' outburst. Events such as the

Broadmeadows strike make it increasingly obvious that in order to control this section of the working class it is necessary for the unions to establish stronger links with migrant workers. It is in this context that we must see the CPA's organisation of the Migrant Workers Conference in Sydney and also the one held in Melbourne last month. The Melbourne conference was held (as the Sydney one will no doubt be) under the iron bureaucratic grip of the CPA who exploited the difficulties of translation and language to prevent any real consideration of alternatives to the proposals they put forward.

The policy of dividing migrants up into groups, each speaking its own language, at such conferences will see its end-product in the creation of special language groups in each of the trade unions. While such special language groups could provide a useful supplementary tool, left in the hands of the union bureaucrats they will not be a means of furthering migrant interests but merely a means for isolating migrants from the rest of the working class and manipulating them. What is necessary is a strategy which allows migrants to play a real part in the workers movement as its potentially most militant element. Rather than separation of migrants into their language groups the emphasis must be on translation facilities and provisions for easy access to the learning of English.

#### Towards Working Class Revolution

The noteworthy thing about the writings of the Communist Party (and also of the Socialist Workers League and the Communist League) on the Migrant Workers Conferences, on the needs of migrant workers, and on the programme for their political path, is that this material contains not the slightest attempt or pretense to lead towards proletarian revolution.

Revolutionaries must never merely accommodate themselves to the current level or mood of the workers nor can the revolutionary party be built only around the demands which can lead easily and quickly to victory. We must have a programme that starts with today's consciousness and conditions and leads beyond them to revolutionary struggle. We must fight:

FOR full translation facilities in the trade unions and on all job sites!

FOR full availability of high quality teaching of English on the job sites at the boss's expense and in his time!

FOR full immediate citizenship rights for all migrants!

FOR decent housing of similar rent and quality to that of indigenous workers!

FOR building fractions based on a revolutionary programme in the trade unions!

FOR broad workers' surveillance committees and factory committees!

FOR defence of the trade unions from state interference! Against Askin's offensive!

FOR trade union democracy! Smash the Labor bureaucrats!

FOR union support for all strikes, sit-ins and work-ins! Strikes against any layoffs!

AGAINST wage controls and also against the fake price controls (which are only an excuse to bring wage controls in through the back door)!

FOR a sliding scale of wages! (so that they go up with prices) and for a sliding scale of hours! (so that the work available is shared around)

FOR the bosses to open their books! (we must expose their excuses for raising their prices and keeping our wages down)

FOR the rights of women workers! For socialisation of housework, free dining rooms, free laundromats, free 24 hour child care centres with bi-lingual instructors!

TO support Labor! Oust Whitlam, Hills and the Labor Bureaucracy! Fight for a revolutionary leadership!

FOR expropriation of industry under workers management!

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Australasian Spartacist, an organ of revolutionary Marxism for the rebirth of the Fourth International, is published by the Central Committee of the Spartacist League of Australia and New Zealand, GPO Box 3473, Sydney. Telephone 660 7647. (Melbourne branch: GPO Box 2339, Melbourne. Telephone 429 1597.) Subscription: 50 cents for the next ten issues.