



Strikes continue; Labor guards shaky class peace

Whitlam can only betray

For a revolutionary workers party!

Although the final results are not yet in, it appears that the Labor government headed by Gough Whitlam has been returned, with a reduced majority of three to five seats in the House of Representatives, and still short of a majority in the Senate. After a campaign in which the two major contenders, Whitlam and the Liberal Party's Bill Snedden, did their best to confuse the issues, it is scarcely a surprise that nothing has been settled, and Parliament is even more stalemated than before the double dissolution. Strengthened in parliament out of proportion to its total share of the vote, the Liberal-Country Coalition is in an even better position to cause new elections when it chooses, and in the mean time can paralyse any Labor government initiatives they wish.

The inconclusive outcome results from the fact that the elections were a largely artificial affair, a by-product of parliamentary manoeuvres and not of a major governmental or general social crisis. And nothing happened during the campaign to alter fundamentally its significance. Indeed some Liberals regarded the elections as "premature", and feel it is fortunate that they did not win at this point. One leading Liberal member was quoted as saying, "If we had gone in another 18 months we would have bolted in, for then inflation and the credit squeeze would really be biting." (*Financial Review*, 23 May 1974). As it is, the election took place during the temporary recovery begun in 1973, which has allowed the capitalist class on the whole to postpone a confrontation with the working class, in spite of a growing strike movement against the effects of inflation. These Liberals are happy to see Whitlam have to take the blame for the economic difficulties -- including a possibly severe recession -- that lie ahead. Neither Whitlam nor Snedden would be able to prevent these developments, any more than they can put an end to inflation. They are inherent in the capitalist system, which both Whitlam and Snedden openly defend.

Even though the elections amounted to so much treading water, the voting results and the character of the campaign give us a rough measure of the shifts in the moods of the proletariat and the middle classes, and the consciousness, unity and purpose of the class enemy. Although it won fewer seats, the ALP gained a higher percentage of the total vote than it received in 1972, up about 0.3% to 49.9% (*Australian*, 23 May 1974). Moreover, the ALP vote apparently increased most among the working class in the chief urban areas, while sections of the petty-bourgeoisie swung to the Liberals. It is impossible on the available information to draw any definite conclusions; but the pattern is a sign of the growing level of class struggle. That the wave of strike action has helped consolidate the working-class vote behind Whitlam confirms the strategic importance of the reformist ALP as an obstacle to revolution. It also points to the danger of an upsurge in militancy being absorbed by an ALP left turn, with the left wing of Labor reformism posturing as champions of the workers. This development, which would enable the labour lieutenants of capital to better betray the working class, is the only possible result of the attempt of the Socialist Workers League (SWL) and the Socialist Labour League (SLL) to pressure the Labor Party to the left.

The development of the class struggle is complex and uneven, and revolutionary Marxists must depend not on hysterical jabbering about an impending "final crisis" of capitalism, which the Communist League (CL) and the SLL both use to a-

void the task of revolutionary leadership, but on a careful and concrete analysis of the situation they face. Undoubtedly the present economic conditions, the rampant inflation and the real fears and hesitations of the ruling class affected the elections. But it is not as the SLL claims:

"Whatever the tactical differences between the Liberals and their allies, the class struggle has entered a new and decisive stage. The Liberals are now driven by the crisis to take on the working class head on. They mean to come back to power and impose open class dictatorship against the working class." (*Workers News*, 25 April 1974)

Even the most cursory examination of the electoral campaign shows that such statements amount to idiot scaremongering. Though Labor did not receive the same degree of open support from sections of the bourgeoisie that it received in 1972 it did receive some (such as that of the *Australian* newspaper). The capitalist class was cer-



Gough Whitlam, Labor Prime Minister, with his narrow election victory, is on probation from the ruling class. He faces a strike wave and economic trouble, while Snedden waits in the wings.

tainly not united in a desire to take the labour movement "head on". Both Whitlam and Snedden issued contradictory statements in their mutual effort to outbid each other. Whitlam first attacked Snedden's phony promise of a \$600 million tax cut as "economic vandalism", then turned around and promised some himself. Snedden demanded austerity, and then pledged to increase Federal Government spending. This large-scale charlatanism

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Maoist road to oblivion "Long March" away from revolution

In the same weekend as the rest of the population was trooping off to the polls the Maoist inspired "Long March" of about two hundred demonstrators reached its target at the North West Cape US Naval Communications Base near Exmouth, Western Australia. The exercise, in the finest traditions of the Children's Crusade and Don Quixote, is an abject retreat from class-struggle politics. As part of the anti-foreign bases and anti-Omega campaign advocated by the Maoist Communist Party of Australia (Marxist-Leninist) (CPA[ML]), by its various front groups like the Australia-China



"Long March" reaches US base at North West Cape. Result: over 40 arrests, base remains.

Society, and by groups like the Stop Omega Committee and the Campaign Against Foreign Military Bases in Australia (CAFMB), the "Long March" appealed to nationalism, pacifism and liberalism.

The "Long March" was portrayed as a spectacular to draw attention to the presence of foreign military bases in Australia and a demonstration of the "growing strength of the Anti-Imperialist movement" (Anti-Foreign Bases Committee leaflet, undated). The organisers of the 3000-mile bus

ride which began in the main eastern cities on May 4 promised activities at North West Cape including:

"Striking the American flag; handing back the peppercorn [a reference to the symbolic payment of one peppercorn as rent in 1967]; and taking back possession of the land. Some radical catholic priests on the tour are also planning to conduct an "exorcism" of the base. Just like in 1967 at the Pentagon in Washington when 70,000 anti-war protestors attempted to exorcise the Pentagon of evil spirits. The Long March demonstrators will attempt to drive out the yankee devils from Australia." (*Pack Your Bags, Sam*, April 1974)

The CPA(ML) evidently has not taken the struggle against Confucius seriously enough, if they allow such medieval mysticism to go unchallenged!

But all was not fun and games for the demonstrators. The Western Australian state government of Sir Charles Court and the local police were not particularly receptive to the demonstrators' variety of patriotism. Fifteen demonstrators were arrested when police broke up a demonstration in Perth and clashes with police and vigilantes in Exmouth and outside the North West Cape base led to 41 more arrests. Despite our very severe criticisms of the Long March and its inspirers, the Spartacist League stands for the unconditional defence of all those arrested against the bourgeois state and demands the dropping of all charges against them.

The exponents of the Long March claim that the 33 US military bases in Australia (including North West Cape, Pine Gap, and Narrungar), a proposed Omega navigation centre and other foreign bases "weaken the independence and sovereignty of Australia, and increase the ECONOMIC, CULTURAL and MILITARY DOMINATION of Australia by foreign powers." The Maoists have tried instead to fit Australia into the model of a colonial country and adopted "patriotism" as their banner following Mao's calamitous dictum of a bloc with the "progressive" bourgeoisie as the stepping stone to revolution.

The bare fact that much of its industry is foreign-controlled does not make Australia a colony. A great deal of European industry is fo-

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Whitlam . . .

provoked expressions of disgust even from the usually cynical pundits of the *Financial Review*.

The bourgeoisie on the whole did not share the SLL's panic. One mining company executive was reported as saying:

"As the campaign drew to a close, it became apparent to us that there wasn't much difference between Labor and Liberal policies on the future of foreign investment in the mining industry." (quoted in *Financial Review*, 21 May 1974)

An enormously revealing remark -- especially after all those demagogic attacks by Labor ministers on the L-CP Coalition for pampering the mining companies when they were in office!

The present temporary boom in the Australian economy is accompanied by a high rate of inflation, relative labour shortages, a new influx of imported goods that pose a threat to industries grown reliant on high tariffs to protect their profits, and spiralling interest rates. The likelihood of a slump in world commodity prices and recessions in the US and Japan add to the uncertainty that has caused a recent slump in the Australian stock exchanges. Signs of a possible downturn have begun to appear; the *National Times* (20-25 May 1974) reports overstocking by retailers.

The immediate effect of an economic downturn will be to add fuel to the strike wave that continues unabated. In the week immediately after the elections shop assistants in NSW won a rise of \$26.80 and car workers have received increases from \$20 to \$30. AMWU workers at Philip Morris in Melbourne have recently won an over-award payment of \$7 a week, and both employers and union officials have predicted that the Metal Trades award settled only in April will not last six months. Strikes are continuing or are threatened among building industry workers, railway workers, power workers, shop assistants and in the car industry.

It is therefore not surprising that certain "good Liberal supporters in the business world" (*Financial Review*, 23 May 1974) prefer to let Labor take the blame for the likely recession and the strike movement allowing the Liberals to return to power in a situation far more conducive to a crack-down on the unions. The strength of the ALP from the point of view of the capitalists -- that it has the support of the workers and can thus restrain them without resort to open repression -- is also in their eyes its weakness; if the reformists fail to contain the class struggle, their ties to the organised labour movement can make it difficult to take that repressive action. Whitlam cannot crack down without seriously weakening his electoral support and causing division within the ALP. The prospect therefore is of a

new dissolution and the election of the Liberals, if Whitlam proves unable to control the workers.

The Labor Government is counting on the trade-union bureaucracy to contain the strike wave. Laurie Short of the Federated Ironworkers Association has stated that the unions need to look at the "strike situation" and that "The unions have a duty, without sacrificing their basic rights, to do everything to keep Labor in office" (*Australian*, 20 May 1974). And the ACTU is trying desperately to derail the NSW power workers campaign for a 35-hour week by taking over the campaign and burying it in the Arbitration system. Even before the elections, the Minister for Labour, Clyde Cameron, threatened workers with loss of government support for their demand in the Arbitration Commission unless industrial action was stopped. The drive for sell-outs to "keep Labor in power" will now be redoubled.

The reformist Communist Party of Australia (CPA) ran senate candidates in NSW, Victoria and South Australia, gaining a respectable vote for a small left-wing party. The CPA campaign was at its typical worst in NSW, where Jack Munday successfully competed for many Australia Party votes. (Munday polled over 8000 votes; Bernie Taft in Victoria got over 2000, and Yun Joakimidis in South Australia more than 3500). Munday's campaign gave maximum proof that the CPA's brand of reformism is no advance over Whitlam's, and moreover lacked any important working-class base. An indication of the audience Munday sought after is the half-page ad which appeared in the *Australian* on election day, sponsored by the CPA. Echoing Gordon Barton's slogan ("Put Australia before Party"), it failed to make even a pretence of "revolutionary communism", reading:

"KEEP AUSTRALIA GREEN -- Elect Jack Munday, Australia's Most Effective Conservationist."

It went on to list a "programme" which might even be worse than the Australia Party's:

"For real quality of life [?]; for people's control of the natural and urban environment; for people before profits; against unfettered economic growth [!]; against rampant consumerism [!]."

Unfettered economic growth is hardly a flaw of capitalism! Munday and his "conservationist friends" have retreated into reactionary-utopian Malthusianism.

The CPA's Denis Freney, in his nonsensical article "Left Grouplets Ignore Socialist Vote" (*Tribune*, 14-20 May 1974), adopts an injured tone and expresses pique that "all the 'trotskyist' groups, without exception, feature 'Vote Labor' as their main election slogan" rather than supporting the CPA candidates. Freney appears to have read only the overline ("Vote Labor! Oust Whitlam!") of the lead article in the last issue of *Australasian Spartacist* ("ALP chiefs promise 'better' bosses' rule"), which carefully explained our position on the elections and our criticisms of other ostensibly Trotskyist groups. In the case of the SWL, Freney's pique is justified; given the basic similarity of the reformist programme presented by the CPA and that urged on Whitlam by the SWL, the SWL ought to have supported the CPA campaign. The SL, unlike the SLL, CL, and SWL, took a clear stand before the election against any critical support to the CPA and explained why.

Freney claims that "Vote Labor" panders to "the electoralist illusions of workers and students". In our propaganda, the call to vote Labor is linked to the demand for "the ouster of Whitlam and the Labor bureaucrats and their replacement by a revolutionary leadership, and a Labor government pledged to expropriate the capitalist class." (*Australasian Spartacist*, May 1974). But Freney

not only won't read what we say, but he apparently can't be bothered reading *Tribune*. The same issue of *Tribune* says,

"...the return of an ALP government [is] necessary to prevent the further rape of Australia by multi-national corporations..."
"...a Labor government which, though not socialist or willing to tackle the basic causes of inflation and other social ills, will make some necessary reforms to benefit work-



Liberal Party leader B.M. Snedden: biding his time.

ing people, and provide the best available conditions in which unions, and workers themselves, on the jobs and in their communities, can begin to challenge capitalist rule." (emphasis added)

If we are creating illusions, then the CPA is guilty of blind idolatry.

The SLL/SWL view that the ALP needs "socialist policies" to win the middle-class vote ignores the fact that Whitlam, because he is a reformist, can also appeal to the petty-bourgeoisie by cracking down on the unions. These would-be Trotskyists are not only wrong in their projections, but accept the premise behind the "keep Labor in office" line of the labour bureaucracy. It is a consequence of their common Pabloist methodology, which misleads the class to think that mass pressure can keep the reformists from betraying.

Trying desperately to explain why they are really different from the Pabloists after all, the SLL ended up attacking the SWL and the CL for the very positions the SLL shares with them (*Workers News*, 2 May and 9 May 1974). When *Mulgrew* predicted the Liberals would begin an "open dictatorship" with the "knives out" and use "all the repressive apparatus of the state", such views were supposed to be orthodox Marxism. But when the CL talks of the election as a "turning point" and "an unprecedented social and political crisis", claiming that "a victory for the Liberal-Country Party alliance would be a defeat and would tend to demoralise the working class" (*Militant*, Special Broadsheet #4), *Workers News* says they capitulate to the reformist bureaucracy (9 May 1974)! In fact, the CL and the SLL merely emphasise different aspects of the reformism they tail. The SLL tails electoralist illusions in the ALP, while the CL tails the union bureaucracy and simple trade-union militancy.

One of the illusions promoted by the SLL is that the election of Labor prevented either "open dictatorship" or a government assault on the unions. This is totally false; such measures cannot be stopped by elections if the ruling class is bent on them. Repression of the unions by the capitalist state, whether administered by Snedden or Whitlam, must be fought by militant *class struggle*. That struggle can only be successful if the present misleaders of the class are replaced by a leadership committed to a revolutionary programme which is based not on scare propaganda but a realistic Marxist assessment of the situation and the tasks faced by the proletariat. If the elections have proved anything it is that neither the CPA nor the SWL/SLL/CL are capable of fulfilling this role.

the opportunity to play an independent role; but this "independence" is designed to help exploit overseas markets and resources and to extract greater profits at the expense of the proletariat in Australia and overseas. The Maoist schema is designed to make cannon-fodder of the working class in new imperialist wars, in the defence of the profits of Australian capitalism.

The Maoists ignore the fact that the Australian bourgeoisie, which has at its service modern

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"Long March" . . .

reign-controlled too. It is the very nature of imperialism to export capital, to attempt to penetrate one-another's domestic markets in order to better exploit labour. This essential understanding of imperialism the Maoists want to deny because it applies to Australia as well as America. The Maoists' vision of an "independent" Australia is a reactionary impossibility. As Lenin noted, the epoch of the independent nation-state drew conclusively to a close with the first world war. Yet the Maoists dream of an Australia achieving national self-sufficiency in the late twentieth century.

Central to imperialism, the highest stage of capitalism, is the growing contradiction between the private ownership of the means of production and the socialisation of the productive processes on an international scale. It is the latter that provides the basis for the advance to socialism, yet the Maoists advocate fettering the productive forces within the confines of one national state.

Undoubtedly important sections of the Australian bourgeoisie would like room to manoeuvre, to balance between the great powers. The breakup of post-war US imperialist hegemony and the development of inter-imperialist rivalries gives them

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SWL excludes Trotskyists

Defend workers democracy!

The Socialist Workers League/Socialist Youth Alliance (SWL/SYA), a group long on rhetoric about "democratic rights", has now jumped on the exclusion bandwagon. The Spartacist League (SL) recently received a letter dated 23 April 1974 from SWL National Secretary Jim Percy which announced:

"At a recent meeting of the Political Committee of the Socialist Workers League it was decided to exclude all members of the Spartacist League from all future Direct Action Forums."

This drastic action, excluding *all* SL members, apparently for eternity, from their supposedly public meetings is totally without justification. The SWL has joined the current spate of attacks on workers democracy that are habitual for the cynics of the Socialist Labour League (SLL) and of which the SWL is itself the victim. The SWL protested shrilly when 32 SYA supporters were expelled by the would-be bureaucrats of the Young Labor Association (YLA) in Victoria (an intolerable political expulsion, which we protested against -- see *Australasian Spartacist* #7). Now the SWL has made it clear that *they will act no differently* than their bureaucratic opponents in the YLA, and their pious protests are but a hollow sham.

A lot more is at stake in all these incidents than the injury done to one or another political group. For Bolsheviks, workers democracy is a *principle* to uphold and defend, not out of some abstract moralism, but as a necessary condition for revolutionary activity, for the political combat to mobilise the masses of workers against capitalism. Naturally, it is the Bolsheviks who are the ultimate principal target of all acts of political suppression within the workers movement. These acts are all designed to hold back and confuse the working class, to prevent it from clearly understanding its revolutionary interests and the obstacles in its path.

Those who attempt to hide their reformism under a facade of Bolshevism will mouth phrases about "workers democracy" even while they try to suppress the real Bolsheviks, who alone can expose their pretence. In the case of the SWL, the exclusion of political opponents from their public meetings is part of a deep-going rejection of all that workers democracy implies (for Bolsheviks) the struggle for revolutionary leadership, and a Marxist understanding of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Workers democracy is an essential component of the workers state that Bolsheviks strive to create. Although these days they keep quiet about it, the SWL regards Castro's regime in Cuba -- a parasitic growth on a workers state deformed from birth, with no Soviets, workers councils, or organs of workers democracy of any kind -- as a healthy workers state. (Perhaps they are embarrassed by Castro's endorsement of Allende in Chile, or his recent effusive praise of his colleague Brezhnev.)

The same applies within their organisation. We pointed out in an article in *Australasian Spartacist* #7 how the SWL has in the past suppressed internal debate, among other things judging the members of its own youth organisation incapable of understanding the issues discussed in the international body the SWL/SYA is affiliated with (the "United Secretariat of the Fourth International").

The SWL is sensitive on the question of democracy, mainly out of reluctance to offend its liberal friends. Accordingly they make a slightly greater effort to justify their exclusion of Bolsheviks than the political bandits of the SLL. The SWL claims, of course, that it is the SL which violates workers democracy by "disrupting" their meetings. Percy could come up with *two* incidents, separated by several months, to back up this claim. One can only assume that these two cases

are the most extreme that the SWL can find. *But on examination, these cases make complete nonsense of the SWL's accusations.*

Here is what Percy's letter says:

"To take just two incidents of Olerhead, one of your members. In the first incident in Melbourne Olerhead leapt to his feet at the close of debate and discussion shrieking -- 'what is it to be -- coffee or communism?' Other Spartacist members backed Olerhead in his behaviour. Olerhead was warned that such behaviour violated our rights and could only be regarded as an attempt to create an atmosphere in which new visitors to the forum would be repelled. 'Olerhead repeated this behaviour at a recent forum in Sydney. He jumped up and screamed at the end of the debate at the chair and members of the audience.'" (emphasis added)

Leaving aside Percy's need to embellish his story with purple prose let us note in passing Percy's alarm at the possibility of "repelling" new visit-



Leading SWL members John Percy (left) and Jim Percy (right). (photos: *Direct Action*)

ors. In fact, of course, SL members do not behave in the way Percy describes, precisely because the SL wants to "repel" as many people as we can from the SWL's brand of revisionism by winning them to revolutionary Marxism. Political exposure is one of the hazards of revisionism; the SWL has chosen the traditional reformist way of avoiding that hazard, by excluding its critics.

In both the cases cited by Percy it was not the SWL, but the SL which first raised the issues involved by writing letters to the SWL concerning them, dated respectively 18 October 1973 and 25 March 1974. *Neither* of these letters was ever answered, yet now these "incidents" are exhumed as an excuse to silence our criticism of the SWL. In a letter of 3 May 1974 answering Percy's the SL pointed out the utter fraudulence of these two charges of "disruption".

"The first [of the two previous SL letters to the SWL] was written after your comrade, Dave Kuren, at a Direct Action Forum in Melbourne on 11 October 1973, accused the Spartacist League of the United States of having lied in a *Workers Vanguard* article. The accusation was without foundation. In a desperate attempt to avoid examination of the charge against our co-thinkers, the chair used his right to control your meeting in order to close it prematurely and refused to allow members of the SL to reply. Comrade Olerhead made an entirely reasonable protest against this violation of all norms of principled political struggle, which would not have been a "disruption" of the meeting, *even if it had been in progress*. But your charges are rendered entirely ludicrous by *your own account*, which admits that *the meeting had already been closed!*

"Our second letter arose out of a forum held by you on 15 March in Sydney. Your comrades repeatedly misrepresented the position of the Spartacist League on the Middle East and after the close of the meeting (during which SL members raised the question from the floor, and the SWL speakers had responded at considerably greater length) Comrade Olerhead, Sydney SL Local organiser, challenged your organisation to a debate on the question of the Middle East, in an effort to achieve clarity on the different programmes of the two organisations. Our letter put the debate challenge in writing, as requested by Jim Percy, your National Secretary, at the March 15 forum."

Far from showing any SL "disruptions", the two incidents are a damning indictment of the SWL's methods of avoiding political struggle. Our letter of 18 October demanded that the SWL document its charges of lying. No documentation was forthcoming; the letter was never even acknowledged. Percy responded to the written debate challenge he demanded by excluding the SL from SWL forums. These incidents show that the SWL conducts political struggle by lying about its political oppo-

nents, preventing discussion of its lies, cutting off discussion at their own forums and evading debates.

Obviously aware of the flimsiness of his case, Percy throws in a few undocumented blanket charges to make it seem more solid. SL members, he says, "disregard the legitimate directions of the chairperson" and "attempt to take the floor when not called upon and so on". Our letter of 3 May, still lacking a response from the SWL, answered these charges:

"At none of your forums have we disregarded any legitimate demands of the chair, nor attempted to take the floor unless recognised by the chair.

"Your attempts to describe a protest at the premature cutting-off of discussion by the chair in your own meeting as 'violation of our rights', 'deliberate and repeated disruptions', and 'violations of workers democracy', are simply pathetic."

This letter went on to point out the real reason for the exclusions:

"You fear that unprincipled slander, your chief weapon against us, is proving ineffective. You fear that if we are allowed to attend your forums your misrepresentations on our positions on, say, the Middle East, will become untenable and you fear that your groundless charges of lying will be successfully challenged. You are simply afraid of open political struggle.

"Your contempt of your own membership, particularly that of your youth section, is of long standing... You now hasten to 'protect' them against an effective criticism of the revisionist politics of your disintegrating international in a desperate effort to shore up your stagnant and politically stymied organisation."

This was confirmed in a display of surprising honesty by SWL member Steve Painter who informed the Melbourne branch of the SL of the exclusions there. He stated that our attendance was making the forums into too much of a political debate, which was not what they were intended to be.

Crowning an act of political cowardice with disgusting hypocrisy, Percy assures us: "We reaffirm here our defence of your rights to participate in the mass movement as we have done in our press." Not true! The SWL is guilty of a particularly gross slander against the SL, aimed directly at justifying the suppression of SL views in what the SWL calls the "mass movement". In an article in *Direct Action* in April 1973, SL members were falsely accused of "disrupting" and "seizing the microphone" at a meeting on 1973 International Women's Day in Melbourne -- when in fact all SL speakers were recognised by the chair. *Direct Action* refused to print an SL letter in response, and thus consciously endorsed these lies. The current charges of "disruption" are cut from the same cloth. In both cases the SWL, reduced to mealy-mouthed slander, declares its political bankruptcy.

The SL has been singled out in a series of exclusions -- in the Melbourne Working Women's Group, from public meetings of the SLL, and now from SWL forums -- for no reason other than our uncompromising Bolshevik politics. The SWL, like the SLL, will not escape those politics by excluding us. Those who flaunt workers democracy can only become agents of the class enemy within the workers movement, a role the SWL's reformist politics suit it for, and one it is evidently rehearsing. We demand that the SWL reverse the exclusions, and once again call for all in the workers movement, whatever their political views, to defend workers democracy against all its assailants.

[Copies of the complete correspondence related to the exclusions are available, free on request, from the Spartacist League.] ■

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Aidair Hannah
(SLANZ Central Committee member)

Trades Hall

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Toward an alternative revolutionary leadership

Trade union tactics and the Transitional Programme

A key component of the Spartacist League's politics is our struggle to build a revolutionary leadership in the trade unions. Our approach is completely counterposed to the petty-bourgeois workerism and militant economism espoused by groups such as the Communist Party of Australia (CPA), the Communist League (CL) and the Socialist Labour League (SLL) all of whom lay claim to providing a revolutionary leadership in the trade unions. All these groups, albeit in their own distinctive ways, capitulate before the present level of consciousness in the working class and fail to provide a clear revolutionary alternative to the treacherous policies of the incumbent trade union bureaucracy, be it of the "right" or "left" wing variety. In this respect the centrist, ostensibly Trotskyist CL and SLL differ very little from the openly reformist CPA, though they lack the influence and authority in sections of the working class that enables the CPA to play its role of misleadership and betrayal.

In contrast to these posturing fake revolutionary leaders the Spartacist League (SL) in accord with the traditions of Bolshevik trade union work, aims to build a genuine revolutionary leadership in the trade unions, centred on the construction of caucuses based on the transitional programme. Bolsheviks do not simply enthrone any militant talking "opposition" to the incumbent trade union bureaucrats (for example, the "left-progressive forces" led by union president Dr. Eric Pearson in the NSW Teachers' Federation or the NSW rank and file Committee for Membership Control in the Australian Workers' Union (AWU), both of which are encouraged and supported by the CPA), nor do they uncritically cheer the formation of programmeless "rank-and-file" committees based on simple trade-union militancy (as advocated by the CL). On the contrary, the authority of the revolutionary party in the trade unions cannot be built by glorifying and reflecting the spontaneous militancy that arises in the class, but only by the most intransigent defence of the revolutionary programme.

The caucus is simultaneously an oppositional force aimed at defeating the bureaucracy and a vehicle for winning workers to the programme of the vanguard party. It is the link between the vanguard party and the class, carrying out the unique political line of the party in the labour movement and ultimately winning real authority for the vanguard in the class.

In 1938 Trotsky concretised the "transitional programme" in the founding document of the Fourth International, "The Death Agony of Capitalism and the Tasks of the Fourth International". He wrote that:

"It is necessary to help the masses in the process of daily struggle to find the bridge between present demands and the socialist programme of the revolution. This bridge should include a system of conditional demands, stemming from today's conditions and from today's consciousness of wide layers of the working class and unalterably leading to one final conclusion: the conquest of power by the proletariat."

The programme corresponds to the objective necessity for a workers' revolution in the epoch of capitalist decay, and aims to develop the understanding of the workers by taking their concrete felt needs (wages, working conditions, unemployment) and formulating an alternative which leads directly to an attack on the capitalist system itself (e.g., sliding scale of wages and hours, expropriation of industry without compen-

sation, workers' control of production, factory committees) linked explicitly to the struggle for proletarian power and the destruction of the capitalist state (e.g., workers militias, soviets, workers government).

The transitional programme is based above all on the *objective tasks* of the proletariat and not on the present consciousness of the class. Any attempt to build on the foundation solely of the now prevailing false consciousness of the class leads inevitably to the abandonment of the transitional programme and the struggle to create a revolutionary leadership. Economism (or simple trade union consciousness) is the inability of the working class, in the absence of revolutionary leadership, to surmount bourgeois ideology and embrace its historic role of freeing all mankind from the shackles of capitalism. One variant of economism is the apparent belief of the SLL that a concern with the affairs of government suffices in itself to break from simple trade-unionism. Thus they seek to render the economic struggle political by placing demands upon the Labor Party or Labor government to implement economic reforms (its "socialist policies"). In *What is to be done?*, Lenin quite clearly rejected this approach:

"Lending 'the economic struggle itself a political character' means, therefore, striving to secure satisfaction of trade (union) demands, the improvement of working conditions in each separate trade ... by legislative and administrative methods. This is precisely what all trade unions do and have always done ..."

What is required is not to make the economic struggle "political" but to make it revolutionary through a hard programmatic intervention in the class struggle.

The transitional programme transcends the partial and sectional concerns of atomised layers of the class through demands which unite the workers around their historic class interests. Demands such as the sliding scale of wages and hours to eliminate unemployment at the capitalists' expense, organisation of the unemployed by the union movement and the struggle against all forms of national, racial and sexual oppression are therefore essential to overcome the pitting of sections of the class against one another and to unify them in the assault against capital. A particularly gross example of the economism of capitulation to the present false consciousness of the working class is the SLL's insensitivity towards and lack of concern for the special oppression of women.

TRANSITIONAL PROGRAMME VERSUS NATIONALISM

The transitional programme embodies the most urgent interests of the proletariat as an international class. The division of the workers along national lines -- abetted by the union bureaucracy which seeks to make the proletariat of a particular country the junior partner of its "own" bourgeoisie -- must be transcended through demands for industrial organisation across national boundaries. In the present situation of heightened inter-imperialist economic rivalry, which brings closer the menace of new world wars, the demands for opposition to chauvinist economic protectionism and for concrete acts of international class solidarity are crucial.

An interesting example is that of the Australian shipbuilding industry, which is unable to compete with foreign shipbuilders. The CPA has openly advocated reformist, nationalist solutions such as demanding that Australian shipping be built in Australia, in effect proposing that Australian workers be protected at the expense of workers elsewhere.

The SLL, which frequently boasts of its international connections, in a recent untitled article in *Workers News* uncritically reports an intended campaign by the workers at the Williamstown Naval Dockyards to force the Labor Government to reverse its decision to allocate a shipbuilding contract for two naval vessels to the United States, thus appearing to condone the reformist social-chauvinist illusions of the workers. The same article, on page 11 of *Workers News*, attacks the "reformist solution of alternative work" giving the impression that the SLL is for maintaining the defence budget of the capitalist state (*Workers News*, 11 April 1974).

The opportunist attempt to bowdlerise the transitional programme into "relevant" and "ultra-matistic" elements is a gross capitulation to the

class as it is and to bourgeois ideology and backwardness which, refracted through the labour bureaucracy, dominates the class and blocks the development of revolutionary consciousness. As Lenin insisted, the massive spontaneous outbursts of proletarian militancy can by themselves lead only to trade-union consciousness. Socialist consciousness requires an intersection with the revolutionary vanguard through its cadre and programme. Thus to pick and choose among the elements of the transitional programme is to destroy its very purpose -- the attempt to link the felt needs of the workers to the struggle for power. To abjure crucial aspects of the transitional programme as "too advanced" simply reinstates the old social democratic minimum/maximum programme, reveals the appetite for reformism and inevitably constitutes an adaptation to parochialism and national chauvinism.

In particular situations, certain aspects of the programme acquire special urgency and immediacy, enabling the communists to involve and lead masses of workers in struggle. But while emphasising particular demands in their propaganda and campaigns, communists seek always to link such demands to the full programme. There is



Jack Munday, CPA leader, BLF official, a typical "left progressive" reformist bureaucrat

no demand which retains an automatic revolutionary thrust in isolation from the programme as a whole, as demonstrated by the nakedly reformist content of the CPA's version of workers control, or the CL's formulation of the same demand. (Another example is the content given the 35-hour week campaign, which has been presented by the trade union bureaucracy as linked to increased productivity and not to unemployment and a sliding scale of hours.)

The primary organisational vehicle for communist cadres in the unions is the caucus based on the transitional programme. The caucus emerges in a continual struggle for power in the union, demonstrating at first in an exemplary fashion the programme which the labour movement as a whole must adopt. As the caucus grows and becomes a real factor in the life of the union, this process necessarily involves tactical manoeuvres -- blocs and united fronts with other forces in the union, the possibility of short-term entries into other formations, etc.

But as Lenin pointed out, the ability to manoeuvre requires a foundation of granite hardness. Unlike those who justify opportunism by arguing that a hard independent stance will come "later" ("when we are stronger", "when the workers are more open", "when they have been more radicalised"), the SL recognises that principled manoeuvres can be undertaken successfully only from a position of some independent strength.

It is permissible and sometimes necessary to make various kinds of blocs and manoeuvres before the caucus identity is clearly established in the minds of the workers. For example it is quite permissible to enter defences in the case of victimisation of militants; or it may be tactically advantageous to work for short periods within rank-and-file formations which, although politically confused and programmatically inadequate, constitute a pole for the most class-conscious workers in the union, attempting to polarise such groups through a programmatic struggle. Such manoeuvres and blocs can only help in the development of an alternative revolutionary leadership to the extent that they facilitate the political struggle for the revolutionary programme. This struggle must be pursued *unceasingly* and must not be limited to such manoeuvres and episodic alliances based on immediate issues. Otherwise, the

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caucus will never become an independent force, an alternative revolutionary leadership based on the transitional programme. A conscious strategy of relying exclusively on such blocs (such as the strategy implicit in the approach of the CL) is not merely a mistake but outright liquidation, abandoning the struggle for revolutionary leadership. Until the caucus has established its identity and authority on the basis of its full programme, its capacity to manoeuvre freely and to block with other formations where there is agreement on elements of its programme is limited, and there are serious dangers of blurring its positions or confusing its followers.

The process of building real programmatically-based caucuses in the union movement depends upon a constant interaction between disciplined communist cadres in the unions and the militant ranks. The caucus both engages in agitation around its full programme and seeks to provide leadership in particular workers struggles, demonstrating in action that only the transitional programme can consistently uphold the felt needs of the workers and safeguard gains already won in struggle. In fact, winning the advanced workers in a particular union situation to acceptance of the transitional programme and the communist leadership offered by the caucus inseparably and inevitably involves the ability to mobilise less advanced sections of the ranks around the caucus in particular situations.

There is a form of revisionism, exemplified by the SLL's incessant ravings that the working class is stronger and more determined than ever or the CL's unlimited faith in the efficacy of rank-and-file initiative, which views the class as a homogeneous mass. It glosses over the manifestations of backward and uneven consciousness in order to glorify the class in itself elevating it above the vanguard. Such workerism, which sees the struggle for leadership in terms of physical proximity to workers (who are supposed to automatically possess or develop revolutionary consciousness), downgrades the need for a clear programmatic alternative and justifies the most blatant capitulation to the backwardness of the working class. Communists recognise that there are layers and polarisations among the workers. Thus as the caucus develops a hard following of supporters committed to its full programme, it also becomes a factor among workers who do not fully understand or accept its programme or its goals but will, to a greater or lesser extent, follow its lead in particular struggles. Especially in the context of a corrupt and ossified conservative union bureaucracy, even a small caucus of communist militants can find itself frequently thrust into a position of leadership when the sellout policies of the union tops and the absence of alternative leadership-forces create a temporary vacuum of authority. During last year's strike at Ford's plant at Broadmeadows, Melbourne, a small core of communist cadre might have been able to provide a real leadership to the militant car workers, and utilise the enormous opportunity to educate a large number of workers as to the nature of the bureaucracy whose leadership they had empirically rejected. Such militants who, through struggling for the caucus programme, win authority as courageous, far-sighted and principled fighters in particular campaigns or job actions, become recognised leaders among their fellow workers, many of whom still do not accept the programme of the caucus.

Unlike the aspiring bureaucrats, who simply gloat over the extension of their influence, communist militants in the unions must view these

situations as invaluable opportunities to mobilise in struggle workers who are not yet communists, but recognise that they can lead to disorientation: either the pressure to adapt the caucus to vacillating elements or the temptation to overestimate the degree of its programmatic support among the ranks and give way to adventurism.

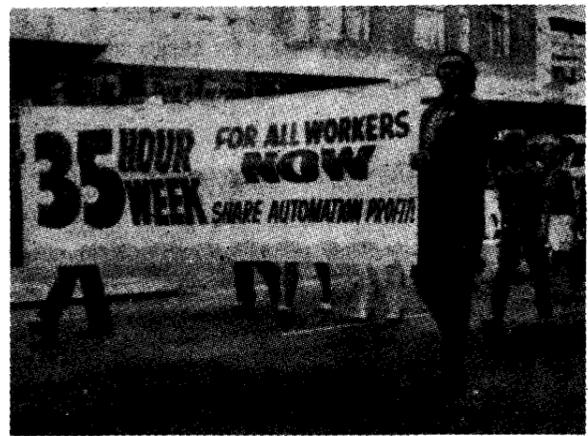
To resist these dangers, militant proletarian leaders must be firmly grounded in the theory and history of the Marxist movement and linked as disciplined members to a vanguard organisation whose analysis and programme, transcending all partial and sectional concerns, embody the interests of the international working class and the experience of previous generations of working-class fighters. Unlike the syndicalists and the petty-bourgeois workerists who exalt the class as it is above the party, the SL wants communists in the trade unions, not trade unionists in the party.

An organisation which does not persistently struggle, within the limitations of its forces, to begin and deepen its intervention into the struggles of the oppressed and exploited is not a revolutionary organisation. But neither the vanguard's colonisation of what Trotsky referred to as "your petty-bourgeois boys and girls" into the organisations of the working class, nor the recruitment of working-class militants and youth, is more than a *precondition*. Until they are tested in living struggle, until they have learned to fight for the programme under the constant pressures of concrete work, they are neither recognised union militants nor proven communists. It is the responsibility of the party as a whole to guide and direct the work of its trade-union comrades and to assimilate their experiences as an integral part of its own world-view.

CRITICAL SUPPORT -- "LIKE A ROPE SUPPORTS A HANGING MAN"

Building a caucus and participating in a caucus are not necessarily the same thing. It is hardly to be expected that a revolutionary organisation claiming to stand on the transitional programme should proclaim an intention to *initiate* caucuses based on a minimum programme -- a fundamentally defective programme which limits the struggle in advance to reformism! This does not preclude a critical participation in partial formations thrown up in the course of the struggle. But such critical support is designed to promote the utmost clarity and facilitate the struggle to uphold the revolutionary programme, and must not be a left cover for what is essentially unprincipled support and opportunist tailing.

In union elections the SL insists that, as the condition for critical support, there must be a clear, qualitative, programmatic difference between the contenders, and not merely the attempt of a bureaucrat on the outer to play the honest, sincere, democratic militant. Communists cannot lend their weight to cynical attempts by aspiring bureaucrats to rope in the workers when the programmes of the "oppositionists" and incumbents are virtually identical. There is essentially *no qualitative difference*, for example, between Carmichael (CPA official in the AMWU) and Short (right wing leader of the Federated Ironworkers' Association); Carmichael's actual programme does not go beyond a pretence of militancy. In the AWU the CPA has uncritically supported opposition to the extreme right-wing Oliver-Mawbey leadership, such as the Better Deal Group led by Lew McKay, and the Committee for Membership Control.



Union contingent marches in Sydney on May Day, 1974, calling for 35-hour week. (photo: *Amalgamated News*)

The SLL criticises the CPA and its supporters for this uncritical support and for making "no demands on his team" (*Labour Press*, 5 February 1973), when in fact there was no basis for either uncritical or critical support.

Another case in point is what the CPA calls the "Left-progressive coalition team" headed by Pearson in the NSW Teachers' Federation. The *sole* programme of this "team" during the election campaign concluded last December was the "restoration of the Federation as an organisation active in the pursuit of improvement in education and teaching conditions" (undated Pearson-Rennie-Davy campaign brochure), Pearson and his "team" backed the dangerous, class-collaborationist proposal for a government-sponsored "Education Commission". This proposal was enthusiastically endorsed by the CPA, and their article on the December Federation Conference makes them totally indistinguishable from Pearson's milk-sop reformism (in turn indistinguishable from his "right-wing" opposition):

"To ensure that this election victory is utilized to best advantage, the need for continuing rank-and-file-oriented [!] actions and movements will be imperative." (*Tribune*, 15-21 January 1974).

The Leninist tactic of critical support is an application of the tactic of the united front. We recognise that the masses will desert their established leaderships *not* because of an abstract call to follow the communists, but rather by recognising in the course of the struggle that only the communists fight for the avowed common aim. The purpose of the united front is to regroup the workers around the leadership of the vanguard, *not* to refurbish the bankrupt reformist's authority! No matter how popular the trendy reformists such as Munday may be in the bourgeois press, no matter what illusions they may succeed in creating among the workers themselves, the tasks of communists in these unions is simply to expose them.

When a candidate for union office is compelled to break from *even* one central aspect of the bureaucracy's policies of abject class collaborationism, and to place himself at the head of a real rank-and-file movement, then whatever the limitations of the rest of his programme revolutionists may offer such a candidacy critical support. If during the 1969 O'Shea struggle, for example, a candidate for union office had called for the abolition of the arbitration system, there would have been a basis for critical support, but

Continued on page six

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Transitional Programme

not if he was simply opposed to the penal clauses. Similarly in the present dispute between Gallagher and Munday/Owens there is no basis for critically supporting the NSW bureaucrats (in particular in view of Munday's open collaboration with the bourgeois state via his position on the Advisory Committee to the Federal Government's Cities Commission.

The refusal to give critical support to such "progressives" or "lefts" in no way prevents the possibility of united front action against witch-hunting, against the implementation of the penal powers, or in defence of union rights in the case of Gallagher's attempts to police the NSW builders labourers on behalf of the employers. The CPA consistently promotes and supports the "lefts" and "progressives" against the "rights" not only in individual unions, but in the various trades and labour councils and in the Labor Party. When the ALP, with its rotten, reformist programme but still the mass party of the working class, faces bourgeois parties in an election, revolutionists may give it critical support in order to set the base against the top. But the criterion for critical support in a contest between tendencies within the workers movement is the programme of the "progressives", and not their relative and immediate distance from the "right".

When a union office-seeker seriously campaigns on the basis of a programme which, whatever its reformist limitations, offers the working class a real gain on even one issue, revolutionaries can legitimately proclaim their support for that plank and offer the candidate critical support even as they seek to demonstrate that only their full programme can win and safeguard this gain, even as they warn that the aspiring bureaucrat will betray his promises once in office. The caucus works along side the ranks while calling on them to rely on their own strength to win and extend the struggle which the oppositionist claims to represent. When the workers' own experience reveals to them the real character of the new bureaucrat, the revolutionists stand forth as the only force which is truly committed to this struggle and can regroup the workers around their programme.

The purpose of the tactic of critical support to programmatically defective or incomplete formations within the union movement is to sharpen the contradictions between the militant base and the reformist leadership, between the formally supportable programmatic element and the careerist appetite, to expose in the process of a common struggle for real but limited gains the vacillations and treachery of the bureaucracy and to counterpose the communist programme as the consistent extension of the aspirations of the ranks. But when there is no contradiction to expose -- as in the case of the Carmichaels, Halfpennys, Mundeys and Pearsons, who offer merely a more "democratic" or more "active" version of exactly the same programme as the "right" opponents -- "critical support" is nothing more than a left cover.

Trotsky considered the intervention of the state the key question facing the unions. In his pamphlet "Trade Unions in the Epoch of Imperialist Decay", Trotsky begins his consideration of revolutionary policy in the unions by stating categorically that "There is one common feature in the development, or more correctly the degeneration, of the modern trade union organisations in the entire world; it is their drawing closely to and growing together with the state power."

Trotsky went on to point to the increasing difficulty of work in the unions, for example in fascist countries and in what he termed "totalitarian and semi-totalitarian" unions. It was precisely in the context of the discussion of the increasing restrictions on trade-union democracy that he wrote:

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"It is necessary to adapt ourselves to the concrete conditions existing in the trade unions of every given country in order to mobilise the masses not only against the bourgeoisie but also against the totalitarian regime within the unions themselves and against the leaders enforcing this regime. The primary slogan for this struggle is: Complete and unconditional independence of the trade unions in relation to the capitalist state. This means a struggle to turn the trade unions into organs of the broad exploited masses and not the organs of a labour aristocracy.

"The second slogan is: trade union democracy. This second slogan flows directly from the first and presupposes for its realisation the complete freedom of the trade unions from the imperialist or colonial state." (emphasis added)

Communists call for the complete independence of the trade unions from the capitalist state, for the abolition of the arbitration system and of any devices (such as provisions for government supervision of union elections including Cameron's amendments to the Arbitration Act) of state intervention in union affairs. Any call for union democracy is meaningless unless accompanied by the most intransigent defence of the independence of the unions. Thus the utterly bankrupt reformist nature of the CPA's calls for

CONTINUED FROM PAGE EIGHT

CPA . . .

tion representatives on an educational policy-forming body -- precisely what the NC documents denounce as nothing more than class collaboration.

No matter how often the CPA denounces reformism and "conservatism" among trade-union officials, it cannot wipe out the continuing central role of CPA union bureaucrats, together with their right-wing colleagues, in betraying workers struggles -- the likes of Laurie Carmichael and John Halfpenny of the Amalgamated Metal Workers Union (AMWU). (Broadmeadows and the new Metal Trades Award are two examples.)

The current opposition to Aarons and his supporters comes from John Sendy, CPA National President, and Bernie Taft, long-time leading member, both based in Victoria. Taft and Sendy are former allies of Aarons against both Hill and the pro-Moscow faction, and they endorsed the programme which was adopted following the pro-Moscow split. Yet their current criticism of Aarons merely echoes that of the Moscow liners, and Sendy and Taft are effectively in a bloc with the few who have remained in the CPA (such as Ralph Gibson and M.P. Ryan).

The struggle is essentially one between two cliques, a political disease endemic to reformist organisations. Taft and Sendy simply feel that Aarons has gone too far in carrying out the policies they endorsed two years ago.

Intervention — "Creative Marxists" front for betrayal

Aside from the Taft/Sendy group, the few remaining Russian-liners, and the dominant Aarons clique, the only coherent political grouping in the CPA is that associated with the journal *Intervention*, based on the Carlton Branch in Melbourne and having close links to the South Australian party leadership and the Glebe-Balmain Branch in Sydney. Among its leading lights are Grant Evans and Rob Durbridge.

This tendency, which is in a very close bloc with the Aaronsites against Sendy and Taft, has produced what it calls an "alternative Party programme", circulated in the CPA in a bulletin known as the Adelaide document. Although there are differences with the NC drafts on several points, these differences have no clear political thrust, and large sections are virtually identical. Indeed, the NC drafts were heartily endorsed in a roneed statement of twelve members of this tendency, including Grant Evans.

Because of the need to leave loop-holes for CPA trade-union bureaucrats, the actual programme of the NC document is limited to a series of reforms. The Adelaide document, in a section labelled "Intermediate Programme", openly advocates a division of the CPA's programme into minimum and maximum components:

"rank-and-file decision-making", and of their opposition to "workers participation", are revealed by its practice in allowing its members, most prominently Jack Munday, to become members of state bodies and its support for forms of "workers participation" such as the proposed Education Commission in NSW.

At times communists may be compelled to work within state controlled unions (as the Bolsheviks did in the Czarist unions in Russia) or to take part in state controlled elections, but this does not lead them to warmly welcome this situation or to give critical support to the "democratic" candidate who utilises state intervention in order to fight a corrupt and reactionary incumbent bureaucracy.

If the current generation of militant workers invests its commitment and its aspirations in installing new but equally treacherous bureaucrats in office then the spontaneous militancy will be diverted once more through the lack of an alternative leadership.

The Spartacist League is committed to the construction of an authentic communist leadership in the trade unions as part of the struggle to build the vanguard party, Australian section of the reborn Fourth International.

[This article is adapted from an article appearing in the 25 May 1973 *Workers Vanguard*] ■

"The Communist Party is dedicated to the overthrow of capitalist society and its replacement by a full, socialist society. However, it also pursues more short-term measures which can alleviate the conditions of the working class and other oppressed groups, while at the same time shifting the balance of class power in their favour."

Without a programme which bridges the gap between the current level of the class struggle and class consciousness and the objective need of the working class to overthrow capitalism, the socialist goal becomes an empty platitude and the fight for reforms an instrument for promoting reformist illusions. The minimum/maximum programme was for the Second International the hallmark of reformism, and so it remains today.

Central to the political outlook of the *Intervention/Adelaide* tendency is what they call in their document the "revolutionary alliance" between the working class and intermediate strata in capitalist society. Although careful to speak (very abstractly) about the leading role of the proletariat, the document argues that it is necessary to build this alliance on the basis of the distinct, conscious and independent class interests of the middle classes.

The Adelaide document, while excluding any element of the bourgeoisie from direct participation in the "revolutionary alliance", and criticising populism, itself has a populist conception, ignoring the role of proletarian class consciousness and looking to the development of the independent class consciousness of intermediate layers which are supposed to have interests necessarily counterposed to capitalism. Unfortunately the interests of the middle layers are not necessarily anti-capitalist. Unless the proletariat, united by the political leadership of the vanguard party, can present a clear alternative to the continued rule of capital, the petty-bourgeoisie is likely to provide the social base for counter-revolution. The *Intervention* conception is partly moralist; the "revolutionary alliance" must include the petty-bourgeois protest movements on an equal footing with the proletariat, as a moral pledge in support of their specific demands. In reality they are proposing an "alliance" of the working class with petty-bourgeois reformism, not a real, revolutionary working-class hegemony over the petty-bourgeoisie.

In order to lend some theoretical camouflage to this mechanical and static schema of "alliances", the document attempts to invent some extra classes so that even more alliances can be forged. Putting up a smokescreen of academic phrases, it concocts an independent "class of non-productive wage labourers". The document confuses a technical category of labour in Marxist theory with a distinct class role in society. Marx defined productive labour as follows:

"Productive labour is therefore -- in the system of capitalist production -- labour which produces surplus-value for its employer... that is to say, labour which produces its own product as capital."
(Karl Marx, *Theories of Surplus Value*, Part I, p 396)

In other words it is labour which adds to the value of commodities. Both productive and unproductive labourers are essential to the actual functioning of the capitalist system. Thus, a janitor who works for a commercial firm is not involved in the production of surplus value, but

"Long March" . . .

and efficient armed forces, will be far more immediately interested than foreign imperialists in smashing the Australian workers movement in a revolutionary situation. Thus the recent demonstration at the Richmond RAAF base, 25 miles north east of Sydney simply demanded that the US Air Force stop using Richmond and the complete closing of all foreign military projects in Australia, ignoring the fact that the base is primarily for the armed forces of the Australian capitalist class. Apparently they approve of the Australian "national" capitalists having such aids to its class rule. Similarly *Paak Your Bags, Sam* (published by the Stop Omega Campaign) recommends to the two super powers, the United States and the Soviet Union that "They should use their 'defence' forces for real defence, and not trying to dominate and bully other countries." Leaving aside their refusal to recognise the class difference between the Soviet workers state and capitalist United States, these idiots suggest that the US imperialists should stop being imperialist and confine themselves to "real" defence, perhaps along the lines of the Ceylonese government's massacre of youth during the JVP uprising in 1971, or the Sudanese regime's slaughter of the leaders of the Sudanese workers movement or

even the Pakistan army's genocidal butchery in Bangladesh.

The North West Cape base is an important part of the worldwide US military network, a weapon in the hands of an enemy of the international proletariat. Along with all imperialist military bases and all capitalist armies it must be destroyed. But the Spartacist League makes no patriotic exceptions for the Australian bourgeoisie. The Australian capitalist class is just as much an enemy of the Australian working class as are the foreign imperialists. As Leninists we demand: NOT A PENNY, NOT A MAN TO THE BOURGEOIS ARMED FORCES!

The Maoists make an appeal to pacifism aptly described by the 15 May 1974 *Campus Spartacist* (published by the Spartacist Club at LaTrobe University in Melbourne):

"Because the Omega bases serve as nuclear submarine centres, the Maoists have infused pacifism into the campaign too. Their publication *Independence Voice* warns 'U.S. bases make Australia a nuclear target. If you want your children to see butterflies oppose U.S. bases -- Stop Omega.' Removing a few U.S. bases cannot insulate Australia from nuclear war. This pandering to pacifism arises because the Maoists have sacrificed the alternative -- worldwide proletarian revolution -- in fealty to the bureaucrats in Peking. Instead they appeal to the capital-

"Comments on the [NC] Draft Programme", signed by twelve of their number:

"It is an important Marxist-Leninist thesis that the revolutionary potential of the unions is very limited, and that revolutionary institutions have to be created 'alongside' of the unions and in the form of workers councils. The limitation of trade union action is determined by the unions primary function as brokers between labour and capital, and to defend the already hard-won conditions of the workers. They are burdened down by this task."

The role of the trade unions is not intrinsically limited by the level of struggle that they are historically developed and suited for. In the epoch of imperialism no substantial, stable reforms are possible because the profound decay of capitalism continually produces massive convulsions and crises, wars and revolutions.

The trade unions are not "burdened down" by any task, but by their reformist bureaucratic leadership, whose interests in this epoch lie firmly in tying the unions more and more tightly to the capitalist state. The political misleadership of the unions by the bureaucrats interferes with and "burdens down" the economic struggle confining it within the bounds of capitalism as it does the class struggle as a whole. *Intervention's* economism simply makes excuses for the bureaucrats.

The Adelaide grouping does not want to bypass the unions -- but they do want to bypass the political struggle for a revolutionary leadership of the trade unions. The rationale for this policy is a kind of organisational fetishism that reduces to syndicalist prejudices against trade unions, "bureaucratic methods", and leadership in general. Thus the Adelaide document on organisation says:

"Where Shop Committees exist in unions which attempt to prevent the development of a broader militancy on the job, the stress should be on the Committees rather than on attempting to change the union leadership first ... This is not to say that the question of leaderships in Unions should not be taken up where necessary and possible [!] but this should develop naturally in the course of struggle on the broadest front and not permit militants to be confined to the problem of leadership [!]"

Whatever the activity, the organisation or level of struggle, it is the fundamental duty of communist militants to offer revolutionary leadership, as against the misleadership of reformists at all times! That is a basic Marxist-Leninist "thesis". Furthermore, there is no such thing as an intrinsically revolutionary institution. The seizure of state power by the proletariat depends not on the particular organisational forms available but on the uniting of the working class won politically to the leadership of a party embodying a revolutionary programme and capable of acting with the support of the masses whenever the opportunity occurs to seize power by insurrectionary means. Soviets under the leadership of reformists cannot play a revolutionary role. At one point in 1917 Lenin advocated abandoning the conciliationist Soviets (dominated by the Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries) and relying instead on the factory committees where the Bolsheviks had a clear majority (see Trotsky, *The History of the Russian Revolution*, Vol. II, p 303).

Connected with their essentially bureaucratic view of revolutionary action arising from organisational forms rather than class consciousness is a suspicion and fear of the dictatorship of the

ists for mutual disarmament. 'It is clearly in the interests of the people of Australia, China and the rest of the world to join together and demand an international summit conference which will supervise the worldwide elimination of all nuclear weapons' (Australia-China Society):"

In fact the Soviet and Chinese nuclear capacity is a key component in defending the gains of workers nationalised property in these countries from imperialist attack. However the parasitic bureaucratic castes that hold political power in the Soviet Union and China fear proletarian revolution as a threat to their privileged status and seek peaceful co-existence with the imperialists in the pathetic hope that they will repay their toadying and betrayal of the working class by leaving them alone. The "anti-imperialist" patriotism of the CPA(ML) reflects the desires of the Chinese bureaucracy to co-exist with the Australian bourgeoisie.

By confounding anti-Americanism and patriotism with anti-imperialism the CPA(ML) can only succeed in helping to drive the Australian working class into the arms of the class enemy and the American, Japanese and British workers deeper into social chauvinism and support for their own bourgeoisies. The task of revolutionaries is to build the independent movement of the working class organised and conscious of itself in opposition to the capitalists. ■

his work is necessary for the realisation of surplus value, because his employer (the middleman) is responsible for the circulation of commodities produced elsewhere. The same janitor working in a factory contributes value to the finished commodity which that factory is organised to produce -- i.e., produces surplus value -- and is a productive wage labourer. As Marx says, "The same kind of labour may be productive or unproductive." (*Theories of Surplus Value*, Part I, p 401).

According to the definition in the Adelaide document, the second janitor is a proletarian, while the first one is not! Unproductive labour does not define a class. The office janitors have no common class interest with cops -- who are also technically "unproductive wage labourers". And there is no possibility of a "revolutionary alliance" between workers and the armed minions of the capitalist state.

A similar muddle is produced by another piece of "creative" analysis. According to the *Intervention/Adelaide* tendency, "Women's domestic work and special ideological functions are a specific form of production" and:

"Women, insofar as they are involved in the domestic mode of production, form an 'underdetermined' class, that is, a class which is not one of the classes of the dominant capitalist mode of production. Their membership of this class is overlaid by their membership of the classes of the capitalist mode."

The family has existed throughout the history of class society, but it always takes a form dictated by the dominant mode of production, and the bourgeois nuclear family is a key institution of capitalist society. And although the family and the oppression of women extends across class lines, the role of the family is entirely different in the bourgeoisie than it is in the proletariat.

Male workers lose far more from the family than the false satisfaction they gain -- it is a serious obstacle to the unification of the class even in day-to-day economic struggles. On the other hand the objective interests of housewives in the working-class family are the same in general as that of their husbands and the working class as a whole. Conversely, it is an urgent necessity for the working class to fight against the oppression of women.

It should not need to be said that the idea of all women belonging to at least two classes is ridiculous, and however pleasingly mystifying and respectably academic it may sound, the phrase "underdetermined class" is simply meaningless. Furthermore, to call the domestic labour of women a "mode of production" is a-historical nonsense. It has been invented solely in order to give a respectable aura to a crackpot theory.

This bizarre theory of a women's class was evidently concocted in the search for a better "Marxist" cover for capitulation to bourgeois feminism.

"Communists support the independent women's movement, developed and led by women themselves, in combatting male supremacy and sexism."

The independent women's movement is a myth, like that of an "independent" petty-bourgeoisie. No social movement can remain independent of the two decisive classes in capitalist society.

The *Intervention/Adelaide* group's clearest statement on the trade unions can be found in

proletariat, demanding organisational guarantees in advance against bureaucratism and Thermidor, and seeking special protection for non-proletarian elements by demanding "official" representation of the petty-bourgeois protest movements on the prescribed organs of dual power as a precondition for taking state power. But real-life revolutions do not stop to make allowances for the arbitrary moral strictures or the petty-bourgeois fears of academics.

Opportunism, as Trotsky remarked several times, in a formal sense always reduces to an incorrect view of the relation between party and class. At the core of the *Intervention/Adelaide* tendency's theoretical and programmatic mush, and of its actual practice in the CPA, is a rejection of the vanguard party and its struggle for leadership. In fact, they want to subordinate the party to the more backward layers of the working class. Rejection of revolutionary political leadership, of the party, means a rejection of the history of the organised communist movement; a-historicism pervades the views of the *Intervention/Adelaide* tendency.

The *Intervention* tendency is fond of quoting Lenin on the need for revolutionary theory, ignoring Lenin's main contribution to the revolutionary workers movement -- the Bolshevik Party. Theory exists for the proletariat not as abstractions in the minds of individual "thinkers" but only so far as it is given substance by a revolutionary political party seeking to implement a programme. Theory is both a weapon in the struggle for the programme of socialist revolution and a result of that struggle, incorporating the historical experience of the class struggle -- experience gained only at the cost of much suffering and blood.

Intervention considers the CPSU, Maoists, and Trotskyists all legitimate parts of the "international communist movement, and calls not for the democratic-centralist Third International of Lenin and Trotsky, but for a mere advisory body like the Second International of Kautsky and Scheidemann.

The theoretical denial of the vanguard Leninist party is the excuse for concrete apologies for the reformist CPA. Praising the CPA for its recent activities "in the industrial sphere", they say:

"But the real strength of the CPA has been and must remain, its large number of dedicated militants who, year after year, decade after decade, have kept the party going and patiently explained its strategies and tactics to the masses. It is due to their efforts that the party has been able to defend and promote the interests of the working class [!] and build its fighting organisations."

This is nothing but a retroactive, blanket endorsement of the "tactics and strategies" of the CPA throughout the long years of its work of betrayal, betrayal for which *Intervention* chooses to share responsibility.

Neither the Adelaide tendency of the CPA, nor any other current grouping within it, is capable of offering a revolutionary road. No tendency emerging from the process of its decay can hope to escape from the mire of class collaboration without first confronting and rejecting its reformist practice, and assimilating the historical lessons of the communist movement. Whether or not such a group emerges in the direction of Bolshevism, we can only applaud any further disintegration of the CPA, an obstacle to the construction of a revolutionary party, and help advance the process with persistent revolutionary criticism. ■

24th Congress of the Communist Party of Australia

De-Stalinised reformism decomposes

The Communist Party of Australia (CPA) approaches its 24th Congress in a state of great internal division. But little change in its current course, under the direction of its National Secretary, Laurie Aarons, is likely to result from the Congress.

From the mid-1960's, but particularly since the Russian-line Stalinist wing split in 1971 (to produce the Socialist Party of Australia -- SPA) the CPA has undergone a series of convulsions that have led to much confusion on the Australian left. Some on the left have concluded that the CPA has, more or less as a whole, miraculously transformed itself from a reformist, Stalinist party into a revolutionary party (supporters of the journal *Intervention*, including on its editorial group Kelvin Rowley, John Playford and Grant Evans).



National Secretary of the CPA, Laurie Aarons.

Others (such as the Socialist Workers League -- SWL) merely regard it as having made a "step forward" (see *Socialist Review*, May 1972). One tendency (the Socialist Labour League -- SLL) thinks the CPA's anti-Stalinism is merely a ruse to cover up its Stalinism and that no change has really occurred at all.

The first opinion can be dismissed as hopelessly eclectic, a-historical, and wildly inaccurate. The second reflects the political kinship between these groups and the CPA. The third is simply a denial of reality. The fact is that the CPA has made an incomplete, but *qualitative* break from Stalinism, as *one concrete expression* of its reformist nature. It has not rejected its reformist past but only developed it further.

The CPA, as a part of the Communist International in the late 1920's and 30's, went through the same process of political degeneration as the Comintern parties in virtually all other countries, a degeneration rooted in the rise of a bureaucratic caste to political power in the Soviet Union, and the subordination of the Comintern to the national interests of that bureaucracy. Those bureaucratic and national interests dictated a policy of maintaining class peace at the expense of revolution in the capitalist world in order, in Stalin's phrase, to "neutralise" the imperialist bourgeoisie. The theoretical rationale for this was the anti-Marxist doctrine of "socialism in one country". The means of implementing it was the eventual transformation of each Comintern party into a reformist pressure group on the ruling class of its own country, a transformation nourished in most cases by domestic opportunist tendencies which had developed in response to the international quiescence of the class struggle during the 1920's.

But reformism is in the long run incompatible with even a distorted internationalism: *reformism is inherently nationalist*, reflecting bourgeois interests which cannot surmount national boundaries. This fact enabled Trotsky, the leader of the Left Opposition which fought against the Stalinist road, to predict, a decade in advance, the eventual dissolution of the Comintern, which was declared by Stalin in 1943.

The CPA followed every change in the Soviet bureaucracy's policy from late 1929 when it accepted Stalin's "third period" tactics, right through to the Sino-Soviet split in the early 1960's. But in the turmoil following World War II the nationalist tendencies inherent in Stalinism had already caused some Stalinist parties to break, partially or completely, from the Soviet bureaucracy. Moreover, the Chinese and Yugoslav revolutions had produced workers states burdened from birth with bureaucracies like Stalin's, but not dependent on Stalin, so Stalinist parties now had a *choice* of "socialisms in one country" to grovel before.

The CPA, politically underdeveloped from the start and remote from the Soviet Union, had often experienced difficulties in following Stalin quite as closely as most others. Titoism had its supporters within the CPA in the early 1950's, and when Mao's party came to power in China in 1949, the CPA was bound to develop close direct ties to the Maoist bureaucracy.

Krushchev's secret speech, denouncing Stalin's crimes at the 1956 20th Congress of the CPSU, and the subsequent crushing of the 1956 Hungarian Revolution by Russian tanks, caused

serious political crises in many Stalinist parties, and led in the CPA to a significant exodus of intellectuals. Coming on the heels of the cold war persecutions, this reaction created a powerful pressure to avoid further isolation.

In the split with the Victorian group led by Ted Hill, who went on to form the Maoist Communist Party of Australia (Marxist-Leninist) in 1963, four things are notable. (1) It brought Laurie Aarons to the fore, the manoeuvre largely responsible for winning the vacillating Sharkey to the Moscow line. (2) Aarons blocked with the right-wing, new-left influenced opposition to Hill around Taft and Mortimer in Victoria, and in order to do so accommodated greatly to their "independent" nationalist reformism. (3) The CPA leadership (primarily Aarons) gained both a bargaining position with the Soviets (who were anxious to retain support of Stalinist parties, so as to isolate China) and the *awareness* of the relative autonomy this could provide. (4) This new split made the CPA leadership desperate to regain lost ground and gave it an appetite towards growing middle-class opposition to some features of post-war capitalism (the same middle-class radicalism which fed the new left and the later petty-bourgeois protest movements). This coincided with a desire to make CPA union bureaucrats more respectable and influential.

All this foreshadowed a growing conflict between the new kinds of reformist appetites held by part of the leadership, and the CPA's subservience to Moscow. The conflict came into the open in 1968 when in order to remain respectable before left liberals, the Aarons wing pushed through an open CPA denunciation of the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia.

Trotskyists denounced the invasion but gave no political support to the "liberal" Dubcek bureaucracy, and urged workers in both the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia to throw out the bureaucrats with a political revolution, *maintaining* the collectivised property forms and establishing workers democracy. The CPA, in opposing the invasion, lauded Dubcek for his feeble reforms and, by failing to call for political revolution, left Soviet and Czech workers with no way out. At the roots of the Aarons policy was not a left turn (certainly not "Trotskyism" as the pro-Moscow wing charged) but capitulation to bourgeois hostility towards the Soviet workers state, which was strong in the middle-class constituency Aarons wanted to attract.

Stalinism as a specific kind of reformism is based on a political subordination to the bureaucracy of a deformed workers state. As long as this tie remains basically intact (even when there are occasional open disagreements; for instance the Communist Parties of Great Britain and France) it is not merely reformism -- which capitulates directly to the bourgeoisie of its "own" country -- but *also* an adaptation to the material force of the bureaucracy of one of the existing deformed workers states, the privileged strata which control the state apparatus in these countries. Thus, unlike social-democratic formations, Stalinists usually will stand unequivocally for the military defence of the workers state to which they look when it is directly attacked, though they shrink from the international revolutionary means necessary to make that defence adequate. Social-Democrats and Stalinists are brothers under the skin, but they are not identical twins. At the same time Social-Democratic and Stalinist parties are often virtually indistinguishable in practice, and are even capable of merging into one organisation.

The CPA gradually abandoned its ties to *any* deformed workers state in order to manoeuvre more freely in its own country. With the split of the Moscow-line SPA, the CPA's right-wing break from Stalinism became irrevocable, but it occurred only as the *result of Stalinist reformism taken to its logical extreme*. Consequently it retains much Stalinist paraphernalia.

Aarons cannot retrace his steps without destroying the CPA; but he can still manoeuvre. Claiming independence, he still endorses the basic (reformist) Stalinist policies of "peaceful co-existence", and "socialism in one country". But then, so do many openly Social-Democratic parties. The North Vietnamese Stalinists have seized on the CPA's break with Moscow as a way to rebuke Brezhnev for turning his back while Hanoi was saturation-bombed by the US imperialists, by "recognising" the CPA. Aarons is only too happy to oblige, using his Hanoi endorsement as a factional weapon. And besides, the Vietnamese Stalinists are still popular in left petty-bourgeois circles (witness Cairns), who see them as "patriots" and who opposed the Vietnam war from bourgeois premises.

The programmatic content of the CPA's "criti-

cal" stance towards Brezhnev and Co. is support not for the *elimination*, but for the reform of the bureaucracy. Not only does it refuse to call for a political revolution in the deformed workers states; the CPA still -- in theory -- regards the CPSU and the Communist Party of China (along with almost every other "left" tendency internationally) as part of the "International Communist movement".

This international policy of "one big family" has its domestic counterpart. One of the most confusing and insidious aspects of Aarons' current manoeuvres is an attempt to restore the CPA's complete hegemony over the Australian left by absorbing every tendency into one big social-democratic swamp. The bureaucratic centralism of Stalinism is replaced by the bureaucratic anarchism of social-democracy. Since in practice "freedom of criticism" outside the party by its members prevails, the most revolutionary official CPA phrases simply become a left cover, without interfering in the slightest with the reformist sell-outs of the party's trade-union bureaucrats. The Second International long ago discovered the convenience of this form.

The CPA National Committee (NC) draft resolutions, published in *Praxis* No. 2 in 1974, are the latest version of this fraud. While the document takes every opportunity to denounce ALP reformism, the policy it outlines makes the CPA a left appendage of the ALP by "seeking to develop mass action to influence the Labor government to implement those of its policies which are progressive, adopt more radical policies, while criticising shortcomings in its general policy ..." It declares that "Progressive policies and statements by the more left ministers can assist development of the mass movement".

The draft political resolution promotes a bourgeois-pacifist policy of disarmament, calling for:

"Immediate ending of all nuclear testing... and support for banning of nuclear weapons and destruction of existing stockpiles."

They would thus denude the Soviet and Chinese workers states of the means of defence



CPA National Executive member Bernie Taft (right) with Alexander Dubcek in Prague, before 1968. (photo: *Socialist Review*)

against imperialist attack. It is the imperialists the workers must disarm, not the workers states, however much they are in the control of bureaucratic castes.

Instead of the abolition of the capitalist armed forces, it demands: "*Reduction* of all armaments". Apparently the bourgeois state should have an army, only it should be smaller!

In endorsing the Builders Labourers (BLF) "green bans", the NC draft document on the workers movement reveals their real character, an attempt to perform town planning functions for the ruling class, instituted by the ruling class itself in other countries. CPAer and BLF leader Jack Munday is quoted in Pete Thomas's book, *Taming the Concrete Jungle*, as saying, "We would prefer the state government to enact legislation to make our action unnecessary. They could follow the kind of legislation that they have in France, for example."

The CPA trots as the chief evidence of its revolutionary credentials its espousal of workers control. But the CPA's "workers control movement" is nothing more than a cynical ruse to cover the reformism of its actual practice in the trade unions, the existing mass organisations of the working class in Australia. The real political content of the CPA's "workers control", behind their self-righteous attack on "workers participation" is shown by their support for an "Education Commission", a demand pushed by Dr. Pearson, CPA-supported president of the NSW Teachers Federation. The proposal would have teacher representatives sitting with Department of Educa-

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