

# Australasian SPARTACIST



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## ACTU Conference: "left wing" covers for Hawke

# "Social contract" means wage restraint!

The Special ACTU Conference held in Sydney on 23-24 September was called to discuss the state of the economy in the light of the Budget brought down by the Labor government the week before. Though the Conference had no decision-making powers, it was Hawke's and Whitlam's plan to use it to give union members the impression that the ACTU was doing something about the economic crisis and at the same time to legitimise a "social contract" with the government, laying the groundwork for a voluntary or state-imposed wage freeze.



The Federal Budget was universally regarded as a calculated concession to the union bureaucracy in exchange for the "social contract", but the trade was not to the advantage of workers. Not only are the social welfare reforms stressed by government paltry, but the Budget will have virtually no effect on growing unemployment or the erosion of wages by inflation. At the ACTU Conference, AMWU assistant federal secretary and CPA national committee member Laurie Carmichael effectively demolished Budget pretensions of "egalitarian" taxation reform with a few well-chosen statistics from the Budget itself: the share of expenditures paid for by workers ("pay-as-you-earn" taxation) has risen from 25% in the 1964 Budget to about 39% in Treasurer Crean's new Budget, while the share of company taxation has fallen from 16.3% in 1964 to 15.79% in the new Budget! Yet Carmichael then declared his support for the Budget and voted for the ACTU executive motion which "congratulated" the government for its taxation initiatives.

The Conference was dominated by a mood of controlled alarm as the officials sought to protect their authority with the rank and file, in the face of their manifest inability to do anything about the economic situation but try to conciliate the increasingly hostile bosses. It revealed an entrenched, wily but brittle bureaucracy whose composition -- literally all male and all white, almost all native Australian, with a likely average age of 50 -- underscored its almost complete isolation from particularly the most oppressed strata of the working class it claims to represent.

With artful diplomacy, Hawke hammered out a consensus on a "total package deal". In fact the whole debate at the Conference was not about whether there should or should not be a "social contract" or wage restraints, but about what terms should be expected, that is, how grossly to sell out. *Everyone* (bar Wilson of the VBEF who was disgruntled by Whitlam's remarks about collusion between some union officials and foreign

companies) voted for the ACTU executive motion presented by Hawke.

As part of the effort to woo the trade unions, Labor Minister Clyde Cameron had produced a new indexation proposal, a two-tier plan in which wages up to the average wage would be adjusted quarterly by a direct percentage application of the consumer price index movement, and by a flat amount for wages above the average. This plan would mean wage cuts for anyone with an above average wage, but nevertheless it was generally accepted favourably. In the ACTU executive resolution indexation is linked with annual adjustments for national productivity changes and "changes in work value". This is no more than a productivity deal. The opposition to it has come mainly from the white collar unions who are jealous of their relativities and want percentage adjustments extended to above-average incomes.

The key concession that the union bureaucrats demanded was not an adequate indexation scheme (automatic monthly adjustments based on the highest wage in the industry) but further reforms in the taxation structure, and in particular a taxation indexation scheme. And rather than calling for elected price committees made up of workers, housewives and the oppressed middle classes there were various proposals for the strengthening of the Prices Justification Tribunal or a mirage of impotent government "price controls".

Once more this price control demand merely served as a cover for the introduction of an incomes policy. Just prior to the Conference and in a reversal of his previous position, Hawke stated that "Since the Budget it has become increasingly evident that the Government needs powers over prices and incomes" (*Australian*, 23 September 1974). Hawke's clearly expressed support for state wage control might have perhaps elicited some murmur from the "lefts". But no, all the avowed opponents of wage restraint voted for Hawke's resolution which states in part that

"Should it appear to Government in consultations with the trade union movement that it is confronted by a lack of appropriate powers which it would wish to exercise to achieve these objectives (the Government's proposals for action), the trade union movement will give sympathetic consideration to supporting attempts by the Government to acquire those powers."

Beneath the diplomatic phrases lies the incomes policy the ACTU so loudly opposed only a year ago!

The CPA confined itself to a few lip-service complaints about Hawke's resolution; Jim Baird of the AMWU talked about a shorter working week to fight unemployment and said he was "worried" about wage restraint. Hawke, who throughout the Conference was extremely touchy about this phrase, preferred the more ambiguous term "wage moderation"; but whatever the label, the content was the same. Tying wages to productivity is only a tool for speed-up. The sensitivity of these social-democratic traitors is however a good measure of the pressure they feel from the ranks, which has created a dilemma for the Labor government only temporarily resolved by the truce with the unions embodied in the Budget and ACTU Conference resolution: how to retain the favour of the bosses without exposing itself before the working class.

Carmichael put up a token resistance to the new Cameron deal on the first day, when he claimed that he "could not accept" that the workers' "current share of the cake" should remain fixed and called for affirming the "right" to fight for a bigger slice. But Carmichael in practice refuses to use that right, as indicated by his support for the sellout \$9 Metal Trades settlement. And conspicuously absent from any of his remarks was any mention of the CPA's "autumn offensive".

One of Carmichael's proposals was to maintain import quotas to protect Australian jobs, enlarging workers' share of the cake at the expense not of the employers but of workers overseas. The reliance on such protectionist measures was another powerful undercurrent at the Conference. Behind the support for higher tariffs by many delegates was an appeal to national chauvinist fears of threats to Australian jobs by foreign workers, echoing the capitalists in the tariff-protected industries now suffering layoffs. This must be fought by international working-class organisation and the demand for the expropriation of the capitalists in these industries, rather than accepting layoffs or protecting their profits.

A subject of more open contention was the proposals to "move toward" limited nationalisations, raised by Carmichael and Stalinist BWIU Federal Secretary Pat Clancy in the first session. Their timid proposals concerned only a few unnamed "key" multinationals and (in Carmichael's case) Australian corporations, saying nothing about compensation or workers' control. All the same, Hawke and Fitzgibbon of the Waterside Workers Federation launched an attack. Fitzgibbon said that nationalisation is "crap", and he and Hawke both stressed that (in their view) there were "Constitutional barriers" to nationalisation. Yet they are now ready to campaign for a referendum to give the bourgeois state power to freeze wages; it is not the Constitution which worries them, but the survival of the capitalist system, and in particular of the Whitlam government. The reformist nationalisations of Clancy/Carmichael, explicitly modelled on those in Britain, are no great threat to capitalism either, but simply patchwork on a grander scale than Hawke's modest taxation reforms and Crean's budgetary manipulations. As Carmichael put it in replying to Hawke and Fitzgibbon: "nationalisation is the only way to achieve stability". They are in a minority in the labour bureaucracy at present because they have yet to convince the ruling class that this measure is now necessary in order to keep workers from going farther still.

Whitlam, to retain control of the government, needs workers' electoral support but also leans on the union bureaucracy to keep them in line. Conversely, Hawke and company need the ALP in order to deflect militancy, whether by conjuring the image of Tory union-bashing or by appealing for protection of the ALP's electoral respectability, and holding out the illusory promise of parliamentary reforms. Thus the real meaning of Hawke/Whitlam's "responsive cooperation" is that the reformist misleadership of the ALP/ACTU makes the trade unions serve not as organs of class struggle but as a policing agency for the bourgeoisie.

Oust Hawke/Whitlam and the ACTU bureaucrats! For a Labor Party with a revolutionary leadership! For a workers government based on workers' organisations!

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# Metal award — fake lefts run to Arbitration

The \$9 increase for metal workers that was handed down by Mr Justice Moore on 11 September and accepted by subsequent Metal Trades Federation (MTF) mass meetings was a *defeat*, falling short even of current inflation rises, much less making up past losses. Worse, it is a big step in the current campaign for wage restraint. In arguing that the increase should not be seen as a "springboard" for other claims, Moore was joined by Deputy PM Jim Cairns and ACTU President Bob Hawke.

Since the award campaign began, the MTF executive consistently pursued a strategy of deflecting the struggle into the Arbitration courts. Playing upon fears and confusion among the workers, they refused to mobilise the ranks (the first mass meeting was not held until a month after the decision to seek to re-open the award was announced). Particularly rotten was the role of the "left" bureaucrats in the AMWU such as CPAer John Halfpenny. After initially opposing taking the claim to arbitration, Halfpenny moved the resolution at the Melbourne mass meeting on 18 September to accept the \$9 offer! And in both NSW and Victoria, CPA members voted for acceptance of the \$9. Throughout the campaign, the CPA limited itself to tailing the official claim of \$15, arguing that to advance anything more was

"unreal" and "sectarian" (*Tribune*, 27 August 1974). At the 23 August Garside meeting CPA AMWU shop steward A Beaver moved an amendment -- later incorporated into the official resolution to accept the \$9 -- to restructure taxes and to take "effective" measures to control prices. The CPA not only had no way forward, but actively deflected the campaign into this reformist dead-end, preparing the sellout in the Arbitration courts.

*Tribune* felt compelled to dissociate itself from the "extremist militants" who were reported in the *Sydney Daily Mirror* as advocating a \$25 rise, thirty hours work for forty hours pay and an indefinite strike. Although *Tribune* knows better, they reported the Socialist Labour League (SLL) as advocating \$30 and an indefinite strike -- affording the SLL the opportunity to rant indignantly about "*Tribune* lies" (*Workers News*, 5 September 1974) and to loudly protest that the SLL only wanted a strike for \$15 and an emergency ACTU Congress (the latter wish the Healyites got, but it only decided on cooperation with Whitlam's wage restraint)! And for all their "anti-Stalinist" rhetoric, at the 18 September meeting in Melbourne the Healyites joined the CPA in voting to accept the \$9! The SLL motion at that meeting calling for an ACTU congress was replaced

by an amendment by Halfpenny which passed. In the confusion when Halfpenny's amendment, which called for price control measures and "full cooperation with the government", was put, the SL mistakenly voted for it. This SLL motion was *critically* supportable; Halfpenny's was not.

Both *Tribune* and *Workers News* know full well that it was members and supporters of the SL who raised the demands reported by the *Mirror* and in addition called for a monthly cost-of-living adjustment based on the highest wage in the industry. If, as *Tribune* maintains, it is sectarian and unreal to call for anything more than \$15, then so was the attempt to defend the living standards of workers. Simple arithmetic shows that \$25 would do little more than bring wages into line with past and future inflation.

In order to cover himself, Halfpenny has been pushing the strategy of individual over-award campaigns as an alternative to a struggle for the living standards of all metal workers. While over-award struggles ought to be pursued wherever possible, Halfpenny/Carmichael's strategy of dissipation only leads to demoralisation -- a major reason why the workers were willing to settle for the \$9. Halfpenny, Carmichael and their ilk are no alternative to the "rights", they only sell out more adroitly. ■



## US ban on Carmichael opposed

The following motion, put by supporters or members of the Spartacist League, has been passed by the Sydney Central AMWU, Melbourne AMWU, Glebe North ALP and the NSW Young Labor Council:

We stand opposed to the refusal of the US Government to grant entry to AMWU Assistant Federal Secretary Laurie Carmichael on the grounds of his membership in the Communist Party of Australia. This action is an attack on the democratic rights of workers in all countries and in particular the right to unrestricted travel.

We call upon all Australian workers and their American brothers and sisters, particularly those in the United Auto Workers union, to carry out all necessary industrial action to force the lifting of this blatantly undemocratic ban.

On 8 September, the Spartacist League sent the following telegrams:

Ambassador Marshall Green, US Embassy, Canberra -- We protest US Government's refusal of entry to Amalgamated Metal Workers' Union Assistant Federal Secretary Laurie Carmichael on the grounds of his membership in the Communist Party of Australia. We demand that this ban, an attack on the democratic rights of all workers, be rescinded.

DR Willesee, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Canberra -- We demand the Australian Labor Government lodge a formal protest against the US Government's refusal of entry to Amalgamated Metal Workers' Union Assistant Federal Secretary Laurie Carmichael on the basis of his membership in the Communist Party of Australia. This ban, an attack on the democratic rights of all workers, must be rescinded. ■

## SYA member breaks from Pabloism

27 September 1974

Branch Organiser,  
Sydney SYA.

Dear comrades,

In the past few months it has become increasingly clear to me that the Socialist Youth Alliance/Socialist Workers League (SYA/SWL) and their co-thinkers in the Leninist-Trotskyist Faction (LTF) of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International (USec) are programmatically and in practice reformists. For a period I believed the LTF to have been merely centrist until its co-factionalists, the Argentinian PST, committed the naked betrayal of signing the "Declaration of the 8". The bureaucratic expulsion of the pro-Mandel Internationalist Tendency by the American Socialist Workers Party (SWP) dramatically underscored this reformism and the state of the federated and disintegrating USec. The centrist International Majority Tendency, represented in Australia by the Communist League (CL), are no Trotskyists either. Their long-standing rotten bloc with the SWP to maintain the fiction that the USec is the Fourth International, their defence of indiscriminate terror (witness the CL's lauding of the Maalot massacre), their support for popular frontism in France and Chile make clear the rotten character of their politics.

The bankrupt politics of the SYA are manifest in its unprincipled organisational practice. Whenever I have attempted to express my views at branch meetings, I have been ruled out of order and told things like "this was decided at the Conference". If I try to discuss my views with individuals, I am accused of trying to form a secret faction. Such suppression of discussion is a travesty of Leninist organisational norms. While it is correct and necessary for leaderships to regulate discussion for cause, this unqualified ban on political discussion simply prevents would-be minorities from forming in the SYA and contributes to the political sterility of the organisation.

In the last year, I have been denied membership in the SWL for my dissident views and others have been kept out for "not arguing SWL politics in the SYA." This conception of youth-party relations reduces the Leninist conception of the youth having organisational autonomy and political subordination to the party to a farce... The SWL/SYA has transformed Trotsky's description of the Bolshevik party internally as a place of "seething democracy" into its opposite of "inert bureaucracy".

Finally, a gross example of the SWL/SYA's liquidation of program came in the September 11 Chile actions in Sydney where the organisation refused to fight for an open platform at the CPA/SPA-controlled rally. But the organised disruption which took place by moving the bulk of the crowd to the US Embassy and then to Martin Plaza proved that the SWL and the CL had the social weight to fight for an open platform in the first place. But where, comrades, was the program of Trotskyism in this action? Could it conceivably be captured in the slogan "US out of Chile" that the SYA was chanting? Or was it put at Martin Plaza rally which the SWL/SYA organised in concert with the CL and excluded the Spartacist League and others from speaking? The answer is NO! Mandel/Percy/McCarthy carried out a "united front" against the principle of workers' democracy. Out of a sectarian fear of political struggle the SWL/SYA/CL liquidated their program -- the SWL/SYA did not even have a speaker! Mandel "forgot" to put the USec position.

Because of the politics and practice of the SYA, I can no longer remain a member. I hereby resign from the SYA in solidarity with the Spartacist League, having reached principled programmatic agreement with it. I urge all SYA members to seriously consider the program and practice of the SL -- the only organisation which today carries on internationally the struggle of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky.

For the Rebirth of the Fourth International

Ross Barnett ■

## Repression grows in Qld — defend the SMG!

The arch-reactionary Queensland government of Joh Bjelke-Petersen has stepped up its repression of left-wing groups and Aboriginals in recent months, preparing the groundwork for attacks on workers' strikes as well. Aboriginal militants including Denis Walker have been arrested or charged. Members of the Communist League have been harassed.

The Brisbane Self-Management Group (SMG) has been victimised by blatant frame-ups. Several of their supporters were arrested on various trumped-up charges for leafleting at high schools, resulting in three trials. The first two, involving charges of wilful damage and possession of drugs (planted by cops), resulted in acquittals. The third comes up in October. Estimates of legal expenses so far are \$1000 with more to come. Although we do not support the anarcho-syndicalist politics of the SMG, we urge the defence of the SMG against the bourgeois state. Contributions and inquiries regarding further assistance should be sent to:

SMG Trial Fund,  
c/o PO Box 332,  
North Quay,  
Brisbane, Qld.

In Sydney, contact:  
Peter McGregor,  
31 Golden Grove Street,  
Darlington. 51 3960

## James Patrick Cannon



James P. Cannon was the finest communist political leader this country has yet produced. In his prime he had the evident capacity to lead the proletarian revolution in America to victory.

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11 February 1890 — 21 August 1974



Cannon (center) with Max Eastman (left) and Bill Haywood in Moscow, 1922.



Rose Karsner and Jim Cannon on his 70th birthday.

# Housewives' wage debate

## ... the class bias of feminism

The question of a housewives' wage has been debated in the women's liberation movement for years -- an exception for the ordinarily anti-political, anti-theoretical feminists who dominate the movement. The discussion has the virtue of highlighting the real politics of the pseudo-revolutionary "socialist" feminists in the arena, such as the Communist Party of Australia (CPA) and the Socialist Workers League (SWL). The feminist rhetoric peddled by such ostensibly Marxist organisations represents a basic contradiction: feminism reflects the social reality of bourgeois and petty-bourgeois women, for whom the sexual oppression of women is the primary form of social oppression they suffer, leading to the false view that the fundamental division in society is that of men against women, rather than the class struggle.

The issue has been current due to some social welfare schemes backed in recent years by the Labor Government. A limited form of housewives' wage -- more accurately a "mothers' wage" -- was seriously considered by the Labor Government in 1973 (outlined in "Assistance to families with children" by John Mahoney and John Barnaby in *Social Security*, Winter 1973), as a means of bolstering the family when women are forced through economic necessity to get jobs, and to sidestep the need for widespread child-care facilities. But Hayden, Federal Social Security Minister, eventually backed down because the proposal would be "too expensive" (\$1200 million a year to pay a benefit of \$20 a week to non-working women with one or more children under 16 and not in other employment), saying "Above all, at a time of severe inflationary pressures, it could have seriously deleterious economic effects." (*Australian*, 9 October 1973). In fact, the effect would be no greater than that of a \$20 a week wage rise.

In various forms, the government is under a certain pressure to recognise, in token concessions to its rhetoric about sexual equality, the socially necessary character of housework and to give it some sort of monetary value. Because of the minimal value of these token reforms and the improbability of any action by a government which is talking austerity, the issue is not of great intrinsic or immediate importance. Its current political value lies rather in the characteristic responses for and against of different political tendencies, particularly those within the feminist women's movement.

### A TOKEN REFORM, BUT STILL A REFORM

Feminists in Australia, both reformist and radical varieties, almost unanimously oppose housewives' wages. The most general and widespread reason is that it would, especially in the form of Hayden's proposal, give a monetary incentive for non-working women to stay in the home, thus reinforcing the role of women as domestic slaves within the family. Some argue that it may not lead to a real redistribution of income or that it will discourage women from working. In fact, the housewives' wage would be no more and no less a redistribution of income encouraging women to stay at home than, for instance, the payment of unemployment benefits to all women without jobs, or a \$20 wage rise under the national wage case male wage structure before the recent changes aimed at eliminating the separate male and female minimum wage. The *real* arguments against the housewives' wage do not concern the actual material effects -- stripped of the ideologically motivated form of a "mum's wage" -- but are *ideological* in character falling into two main categories: (1) its importance relative to other reforms and whether, by competing with other lobbying efforts, it is not purely diversionary; and (2) the effect of its form on the consciousness of women of their oppression (reinforcing the "special role") and its use in bourgeois propaganda to keep women in the home.

It is true that the housewives' wage is posed in such a way as to ideologically reinforce the role of women as domestic slaves within the nuclear family, and that it appeals to false consciousness among both working-class men and women. But it would still be a reform, a small monetary gain for the working class. A handout from the government rather than a real "wage", it is analogous to unemployment benefits. In every case, the capitalist class attempts to use the reforms it introduces to serve its own ideological needs, to encourage false consciousness (eg, reformist consciousness). Some kinds of "reforms" are *inherently* divisive because they seek to advance one section of the class only at the expense of another -- an example would be preference to women over men in hiring. But this is *not* the case with a housewives' wage, even if limited to mothers without jobs. It is only for

those who seek reforms *within the limits of capitalism* that genuine (including token) reforms are *counterposed* to other reforms because (for example) the limits of capitalist state budgets dictate choices. Revolutionaries do not accept those premises, and take their bearings from the needs of the masses instead.

Revolutionaries should therefore not *oppose* the introduction of schemes such as the Hayden plan. But to settle for the "mothers' allowance", to make it a central demand, or to allow it to divert attention from more important issues, would be reformism at its worst, precisely because of its token nature and its shortcomings which make it susceptible to propaganda for the bourgeois family. The discrimination against women with jobs stems not from the payments to those without, but from the context -- the performance of household tasks within the bourgeois nuclear family. That is why the central programmatic attack against women's oppression must be for measures aimed at the *socialisation of household duties* and the integration of women into productive life on an equal footing. This cannot be achieved under capitalism, and must be part of a program for the expropriation of the ruling class and for workers' power.

### WEL AND THE HOUSEWIVES' WAGE

Three papers on the issue have been circulated preparatory to the National Conference of Women on Socialism and Feminism to be held in Melbourne in October. These three papers represent three main trends in the women's movement: the Women's Electoral Lobby (WEL) variety of bourgeois parliamentary pressure groups; the representatives of reformist or centrist "socialists" who adapt to feminism; and the quasi-Marxist feminism now typified by people like Selma James and Mariarosa Dalla Costa. WEL representatives speak for mainstream feminism in opposing housewives' wages; the CPA and SWL have done the same (although the CPA vacillates). On the other extreme are those feminists for whom it is something of a panacea.

One of the papers is Elizabeth Windschuttle's "Should WEL support a Mother's Wage?". Her approach is dominated by the assumption that the nuclear family can be reformed out of existence by the gradual entry of women into the workforce with no social revolution -- that is, under capitalism. The rest of her argument hinges on the belief that the \$20 wage for non-working mothers will discourage women from getting jobs, which will in turn reinforce among all women the myth of the "women's role in the home". Thus she says,

"A wage that encourages some women to stay at home reinforces the concept of the double role [of women as workers and housewives] and thus is actively against the interests of all women who are in the workforce."

The implication is that forcing more women to work from economic necessity is the way to fight this false consciousness. But the same logic applies equally well to all male wages; the more money the husband brings home, the less the "incentive" for his wife to get a job. It is an argument for cutting male wages to force more non-working housewives to get jobs!

The same objections apply to Windschuttle's remarks, reflecting the experiences of middle-class women with professional training, that "Offering a woman money to stay at home at one time in her life thus works as a definite discrimination against her when she later finds, as the majority do, that she wants to get a job." It is simply not true, in the first place, that most women at present actually have the general *alternative* of working. The real problem here is not monetary incentives to stay home, but the lack of jobs for women under capitalism. Unemployment is essential to capitalism which needs a "reserve army of labour" of which working-class women are generally a part. Windschuttle, who accepts capitalism, neglects to say where the jobs are going to come from, and in fact is incapable of fighting against unemployment, and has no interest in doing so.

The real core of Windschuttle's position is not the loss of professional skills by working-class women, who are largely deprived of the opportunity to acquire them in the first place, but something else entirely. She writes that Hayden's plan "would naturally divert finance from reforms for which we are currently pressing in child care, pre-schools, after school and holiday care programmes for women who must work or want to work." The perspectives of Windschuttle/WEL do not extend beyond the framework of parliamentary horse-trading. Accepting the limits of parliamentary budgets, they are forced to fight

for one set of reforms only at the expense of others. To extend the argument down the line: adequate child care would mean less money for a good national health care program; tax relief for workers would mean less money for all such programs because the existing parliamentary state is a *bourgeois* state, subordinate to the general interests of the capitalist class, based on *profit*. All such reforms are necessary; but if the paltry mothers' wage is too much for the bourgeoisie, it is clear that they will have to be overthrown and a more rational social order instituted before anything substantial can be gained. As far as pressuring the present Labor Government goes, the alternative to a mothers' wage is *not* free, quality 24-hour child care for all, but so far nothing at all, and the best to be expected is partial, part-time, inadequate child care and the prospect of growing unemployment taking women workers out of the work force.

The general response in WEL has been more clearly hostile than Windschuttle's, revealing a complete lack of concern for working-class women and a middle-class insistence on the high ground of absolute moral principle which insists that (for example) a migrant mother of six whose husband earns \$80 a week must refuse an additional \$20 a week. A characteristic example from another WEL contribution shows clearly the *bourgeois* essence of feminist ideology:

"... a 'mother's wage' will not encourage responsible parenthood or help solve over-population [!]." ("On WEL's position in the mother's wage debate" by Caroline Graham)

Another of the papers being circulated is an article by the CPA's Mavis Robertson, "Towards Liberation: Which Step Now?" (*Australian Left Review*, March/April 1974). Most of Robertson's arguments are either evasive sophistries or nothing but obfuscation. The key to her position that a housewives' wage is an unacceptable reform is her reformist conception of priorities:

"The need now is to channel campaigning energy into winning conviction that child care must be the priority, that the demand for a mother's allowance is a diversion which, in any case, is less likely to be achieved, and if achieved, would not solve, but rather enhance the problems most mothers face."

This is merely a left-wing gloss on Windschuttle's more honest lobbyist's position. In fact, a "mothers' allowance" would enhance the problems of women only to the same extent as the national wage case before the recent changes, in which a male wage based on family needs was used as an excuse for a lower minimum wage for female labour. Such blatantly discriminatory systems must be fought, but not by cutting male wages or by opposing wage rises granted under this system, as Robertson's position would lead to.

Of course the "mothers' wage" is no threat to the nuclear family or the capitalist system -- but that is true of many reforms, and in a fundamental sense is true of *any* isolated reform (eg, shorter work week). It is also incontestable that child care is much more important than a token reform such as the mothers' wage which *assumes* the continuation of women's oppression. Robertson simultaneously says that the "mothers' allowance" is "less likely to be achieved". But precisely because it is a weak reform, the bourgeoisie would certainly be more likely to grant some sort of housewives' wage than to provide adequate free child care!

Continued on page six

### AUSTRALASIAN SPARTACIST

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EDITORIAL BOARD: Bill Logan (chairman)  
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GPO Box 3473, Sydney, NSW, 2001. GPO Box 2339, Melbourne, Victoria, 3001.

Telephone 660-7647 Telephone 429-1597

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# Stalinophobic brand of SWAG and the "Third Camp"

The Socialist Workers Action Group (SWAG), located in Melbourne, has distinguished itself by its unserious or frivolous approach to its purported political tasks. But although it has never sought to break out of its parochial Melbourne existence, it has evolved the style and program of "Third Camp" tendencies like the International Socialists (IS) in Great Britain and the group of the same name in the United

with the Menshevik conceptions of the IS, in which the "democracy" of the MWG allowed the dominant clique to manipulate and manoeuvre, since the majority had no means of holding them to a political line. Thus leaflets were produced in the name of the MWG without any authorisation by the membership but by an "executive" ostensibly intended only to deal with routine organisational matters.

leadership clique to try to seal off other members from political discussion by forming a group inside SWAG called "Red Inc" supported by Nadel, Flaherty, Stone, student politician Tess Lee-Ack, and cartoonist Mark Matcott. Red Inc declared that SWAG was a "reasonably healthy group", but that "comrades must ultimately [] move toward Leninist conceptions". Rather than "be divisive or ... factionalise" Red Inc proposed to discuss itself those abstruse things (like Leninism) which "cannot be presently discussed in SWAG". It was only with the absence of any real struggle over the politics of *The Battler*, and with the formation of Red Inc and its unchallenged hegemony, that the miring of SWAG in the third camp became essentially complete.

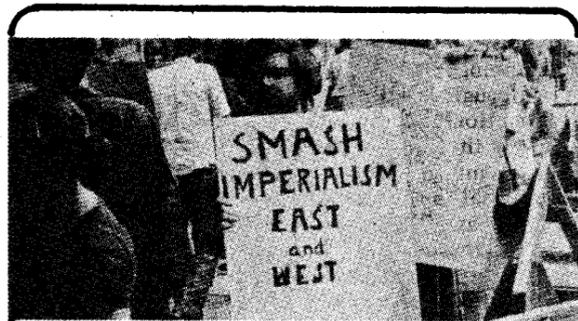
The thoroughly anti-Leninist practice of SWAG exemplified by the process of its formation is based on the general rejection of the Leninist conception of the party, a rejection which is a constituent part of "third camp" politics. Red Inc defined its "Leninism":

"...it restricts its membership. It does not allow this restriction to become an impermeable wall between itself and the working class. Rather it makes its internal discussion known to the working class. Minorities have the right to express their ideas outside the party, as long as this does not interfere with the party's action. (Minorities have the right to recruit to the party on the basis of their own politics, as long as the recruits understand majority positions and accept party discipline.)" ("Red Inc", SWAG Discussion Bulletin no 2, 8 January 1973)

Wherever this conception comes from, it is not from Leninism, of which Trotskyism is the present-day continuation. When SWAG's forerunner Max Shachtman demanded a separate public press for his faction in the American (then-Trotskyist) Socialist Workers Party (SWP) in 1940, Trotsky said:

"...Shachtman finds, or better to say invents, 'historical precedents'. In the Bolshevik Party the opposition had its own public papers, etc. He forgets only that the Party at that time had hundreds of thousands of members.... Under such conditions for the opposition [in the SWP] to have their own public paper or magazine is a means not to convince the Party but to appeal against the Party to the external world.

"The homogeneity and cohesion of a revolution-



"THIRD CAMPISM" IN ACTION -- On 23 June 1973 the New York IS demonstrated outside the USSR mission demanding freedom for all political prisoners. Right-wing East European nationalist groups chose the same time and place to publicise their "Captive Nations Week". Though the demonstrations were separate they had a common impact -- no doubt embarrassing to the IS, but a logical result of the "third camp" equation of US and "Soviet imperialism".



States; and while SWAG has been a haven for the unsure, the disillusioned and the halfhearted, it has also attracted inexperienced but subjectively revolutionary individuals. For this reason alone it is necessary to expose its fraudulent claim to having a revolutionary perspective.

SWAG's best known public organ is the broadsheet *Hard Lines*, published by the Revolutionary Communist Club at Monash University. A similar news-sheet, *Red Ink* is published at LaTrobe University. In November 1972 the group published the first (and last) issue of a tabloid newspaper, *The Battler*. A new publication in duplicated magazine format, *Front Line*, appeared in May and seems to have attained a limited degree of regularity; three issues have actually come out.

SWAG has its origins in the old *Toesin* group centred on the Victorian Labour College. As the *Toesin* group majority moved to merge with the Sydney-based Workers Action to form the Healyite Socialist Labour League (SLL), a loose opposition comprising Dave Nadel (a perennial student politician), Chris Gaffney (a lecturer at the Victorian Labour College), and Jim and Jeanette Raabe broke off, without (partially excepting Gaffney) making any real effort to struggle in the group. But their opposition was primarily the product of dilletantism and they proved incapable of making a revolutionary criticism of Healy's inverted Pabloism. Instead, they opposed to the Healyite sectarian posturing a suspicion of or hostility to any form of revolutionary discipline, and lacking a programmatic axis, their criticism developed to the right.

It was these individuals and their coterie that formed the core of the SWAG when it was set up in mid-1972 as the Marxist Workers Group (MWG). They were joined by Janey Stone and one Ron Flaherty, both of whom had worked with the US IS group. Though in the early period the MWG was a loose grouping containing a number of tendencies, it was even at that stage dominated by the anti-Leninist "third camp" positions which Stone and Flaherty supported. The open, structureless nature of the group fitted in perfectly

In July 1972 the group adopted a statement of principles (printed in the MWG Newsletter post-dated 10 November 1972) which, although with an implicit thrust toward IS politics, was couched in deliberately vague terms intended to represent an unprincipled "consensus" of the heterogeneous group. This document, collecting a range of New Left inclinations under a superficial veneer of class analysis, had however no binding character, and no membership criteria at all were adopted until September when a bare minimum was established which fell short even of Menshevism (MWG Newsletter, postdated 4 September 1972). And in practice, "members" were not hindered from pursuing a counterposed political line.

The transformation of this swamp into an avowedly third-campist political tendency was consequently an obscure process. One stage was marked by the appearance in late November 1972 of *The Battler*, which also marked a change in the name of the group to its present one. Even then, *The Battler* proclaimed that it was "not a 'political line' newspaper"! Like the preceding MWG, however, *The Battler* did have a line, still not explicitly IS but already explicitly reformist in its call to push Whitlam to the left, and its call for (barely) critical support to the CPA's candidates in the elections.

A series of defections and criticisms around the issues raised by *The Battler* prompted the

## Mandel tours Australia . . .

# "Marxist" professor dodges

The lecture tour made by the "socialist scholar" Ernest Mandel in early September confirmed everything the Spartacist League had said about this learned exponent of Pabloite revisionism. With both Australian sympathising sections of the (not very) "United Secretariat of the Fourth International" (USec), the Communist League (CL) and the Socialist Workers League (SWL) clinging to the economist's coattails and in keeping with his role in the rotten federated bloc of the USec Mandel did his best to avoid presenting any programmatic positions.

Mandel's ability to draw large audiences was based largely on his reputation as a "Marxist economist". In fact, Mandel has been one of the foremost exponents of the theory of neo-capitalism. A few years ago Mandel was

"quite convinced that starting either with the great depression of 1929-32 or with the second world war, capitalism entered into a third stage of its development, which is as different from monopoly capitalism or imperialism described by Lenin, Hilferding and others as monopoly capitalism was different from classical 19th century laissez-faire capitalism" (*The Worker Under Neo-Capitalism*, published by Socialist Youth Alliance).

At the Sydney public meeting Mandel claimed that he had always predicted that the post-war boom would end and that he never argued that neo-capitalism had permanently suppressed the contradictions of capitalism. But like Kautsky who never actually said that the contradictions of capitalism had been overcome, Mandel's protestations are empty phrases to cover a fundamental revision of Marxism.

In the past Mandel has explained neo-capitalism in terms of accelerated technological innovation, permanent war economy and the expanding colonial revolution, which transferred the main source of monopoly profits from the colonial countries to

the imperialist countries themselves. According to Mandel (and others) it was neo-capitalism that caused the "post-war boom". The reason for this theory was to provide a rationale for the Pabloite predecessor of the USec tailing colonial revolutions, in line with Pablo's idea that the epicentre of world revolution had "shifted" to the third world countries, paralleling the defeatist third-worldism of Sweezy and company. In fact there was no exceptional period of capitalist growth after World War II. Two of the major imperialist powers (Britain and the US) had growth rates below their historic average while others (Japan, West Germany and France) had growth rates above, but not qualitatively higher than, their historic norms, which can be explained without recourse to neo-capitalist theories. (See Joseph Seymour, "Myth of Neo-Capitalism", *RCY Newsletter*, Jan-Feb, 1972)

1971 marked the break-up of the post-war capitalist order into open inter-imperialist rivalry along with an upsurge in the class struggle, reflecting the recovery of the working class from the defeats suffered at the end of the war, and the growing contradictions in the imperialist order. Now that the "boom" of "neo-capitalism" appears to be over Mandel has revised his impressionistic theories to suit changed appetites. His "broad mass vanguard", which he described in Sydney as "acting increasingly independently and autonomously" and becoming "an objective factor in its own right", is an amorphous category which, to the extent that it reflects empirical reality, may encompass many elements disaffected with the traditional leaders of the working class, but does not have the automatically revolutionary character Mandel endows it with. For Mandel, democratically elected negotiating teams in Italy or isolated struggles for workers' control offset the need for the conscious intervention of the Leninist vanguard (although Mandel thinks a vanguard party would be nice).

## correction

The article "Spartacists expose revisionists in LaTrobe elections" in *ASp* no 11, August 1974, incorrectly identified the Maoist Radical Student Movement at LaTrobe University as the "Revolutionary Student Movement".

# left social democracy

ary propaganda organisation such as the SWP must be incomparably greater than that of a mass party." (Trotsky, *In Defense of Marxism*, p 161)

SWAG's semi-social-democratic, semi-libertarian conception of discipline reveals a complete lack of seriousness. For communists "discussion" means political struggle, because for the vanguard to pursue a false policy endangers the revolution. "Ideas" do not exist in the abstract but have class roots. SWAG on the contrary believes in discussion for its own sake. Moreover, to open the disputes of the vanguard party automatically, on principle, to the masses of workers means to endorse and promote appeals to *lower class consciousness* over the heads of the vanguard, the *class-conscious elements*. Implicit in this is a purely metaphysical conception of democracy which is foreign to the very thought of a conscious vanguard, totally abstracting from the concrete reality of a politically *heterogeneous* class.

Also metaphysical is the distinction between "ideas" and "action", expressed as well in SWAG's basic acceptance of the social-democratic myth that trade unions are for working-class "action" while the ALP is their "political" expression. Moreover, it fits their idea that an alternative leadership to the trade union bureaucracy can be built on militant action, while *suppressing* the transitional program which they ostensibly support.

At its August 25-26 1973 conference SWAG was still full of good intentions and with "nearly unanimous" resolution decided on:

"...the establishment of a political leadership body to initiate discussion to develop a political line."! (*Workers Power* (IS/US), 4 October 1973)

Mimicking Bernstein's evolutionary socialism SWAG promises Leninism at a snail's pace. Nor is SWAG in practice internationalist. While it claims "fraternal" links to groups like the British or US IS, these are little more than loose informal ties, and neither SWAG nor the IS groups have any perspective of building a democratic-centralist international.

The political tendency represented by SWAG originated in the struggle of the Shachtman/Abern/Burnham faction of the American SWP against a central element of the Trotskyist program -- the unconditional military defence of the Soviet

Union, as a bureaucratically controlled, degenerated workers state, against imperialist attack. Beginning as a capitulation to bourgeois public opinion against the USSR following the Hitler-Stalin pact and the Soviet invasion of Finland and Poland in 1938-39, the position of Shachtman soon developed into a theory that the USSR was not a workers state at all but a *new kind* of class society in which the Stalinist bureaucracy was a new ruling *class* -- a modern barbarism. During the build-up to the Second World War such theories, identifying fascism and Stalinism as the new barbarism flourished. They have in common an inability to distinguish the *contradictory* character of the Stalinist bureaucracy which balances between its base in the property forms of the workers state and imperialist capitalism, and they justified a capitulation to bourgeois hostility to the workers state.

An article by Flaherty in *Front Line* no 2 (June 1974) repeats Shachtman's arguments, of which the key is (in Flaherty's version):

"... workers' democracy [is] the very core of the question of the workers' state. And for good reason. The proletariat is not a new property-owning class. It only 'owns' property through its *control of the state*. Given a state-owned economy, if the working class loses control of the state, it has lost control of the means of production, and its social rule therefore ends simultaneously with its political rule."

## CLASS AND PROPERTY IN THE WORKERS STATES: SWAG ABANDONS MARXISM

The existence of the new "class society" is demonstrated by a purely formal, terminological syllogism: state owns the means of production; Stalinist bureaucracy "owns" (ie, controls) state; hence, Stalinist bureaucracy owns the means of production and constitutes the new ruling class. Thus two different class systems -- the dictatorship of the proletariat and "bureaucratic collectivism" -- are alleged to rest on the same property forms, that is, the same system and organisation of production, a planned, collectivised economy; and the class character of this economy is *exclusively* determined by control of the state apparatus -- by *superstructural* phenomena. This is a profound revision of Marxism, an ideology based on historical materialism. The Marxist understanding of "property" and hence "class" is a *historical concept*, and not a *definitional construct*. Marxism discloses that

successive ruling classes emerge at definite stages in the historic process of the development of the productive forces as a result of deeply rooted inner needs of production. Marx recognised in the modern propertyless proletariat the only social class capable of overturning the bourgeois order and wrenching the productive forces from the destructive accumulating contradictions of capitalism, reorganising them on the necessary collectivist basis, and maintaining and developing these economic prerequisites for the ultimate establishment of classless socialist society. It is this unique historic mission of the proletariat which invests the collectivised form of property with its proletarian character.

Thus Shachtmanites like Flaherty, must answer the question whether "bureaucratic collectivism" is historically progressive -- what is its historical reason for existence? Flaherty says,

"It might finally be asked whether bureaucratic collectivism represents some sort of New Order destined to usurp the place of the working class as the grave digger of capitalism. The possibility cannot be theoretically excluded, and represents one possible realisation of the tendency to barbarism in late capitalism." (*Front Line*, June 1974)

So it is a new form of barbarism, an historical *retrogression*. But how then explain the enormous task represented by the industrialisation of the USSR -- carried out under Stalin? Here is obvious empirical *proof* of the historical validity of the planned, collectivised economy even with the terrible distortions imposed by the Stalinist Thermidor. The product of Shachtman's terminological and definitional sleight-of-hand is an historical freak, without either the pre-history of an oppressed class within the old social order or the birthright to a viable future in the new. His theory yields no consistent elementary criteria for determining whether the new bureaucratic class society is progressive or retrogressive.

Flaherty attempts to point to the post-war Soviet occupation of eastern Europe as an event totally unanticipated by Trotsky and requiring a re-evaluation of Stalinism. As an argument against Trotsky's analysis, this is not only false, but dishonest. Contrary to Flaherty, Trotsky not only explicitly foresaw the possibility that such *qualitatively deformed and limited* "revolutions from above" could be carried out by

Continued on page seven

## vital issues

At the Sydney public meeting Mandel was able to use Socialist Labour League (SLL) national secretary Jim Mulgrew as a convenient whipping boy. Although Mulgrew's criticism was formally from the left, the SLL is incapable of developing any real criticism of Mandel as it also accepts the myth of the "post-war boom", giving it their own distinctive crack-pot monetarist explanation. They only invert the conclusions with their hysterical "third period" crisis-mongering. The SLL also explains the "post-war boom" with the argument that:

"Faced with the strength of the working class after the war, and conscious that a return to the 1930's would produce revolutionary upheavals in the advanced capitalist countries, the bourgeoisie was forced to make concessions to the working class." (*Workers News*, 19 September 1974)

So the "post-war boom" was just a concession to the workers!

It is not surprising that Mandel, who places so much faith in the "autonomy" of the "broad mass vanguard", does not attach too much importance to a clear stand against class collaboration. Occasionally, if the factional need arises, he will try to appear orthodox. Thus the USec majority, shortly before Mandel's visit to Australia issued a statement condemning their sympathising section, the PST, in Argentina for class collaboration and for acting "in contradiction with the conceptions and traditions of Trotskyism". Mandel's closest comrades-for-armed-struggle in Australia, the CL, reprinted this statement the week prior to his visit. Yet when challenged at the Sydney public meeting as to why such an organisation was allowed to remain as part of an ostensibly Trotskyist organisation, Mandel, no doubt with a view to the sensibilities of his not-so-close comrades-for-legal-reform, the SWL, stated that the PST was still "basically Trotskyist"!

Small wonder that he attacked the Spartacist

League for trying to build what he called a "monolithic" international. According to this shameless peddler of rotten blocs, he like Lenin stands for democratically dealing with differences. Mandel forgot to explain why he has remained silent about the bureaucratic expulsions of his factional supporters from the SWP (American fraternal supporters of the USec), or the undemocratic handling of oppositionists by his supporters in the Canadian RMG. He even went so far as to energetically assert that in the early Comintern it was the norm for disputes to be settled publicly and that Lenin condoned this. Lenin and the Bolsheviks saw such public debate in the formative stages of the Comintern not as a good thing but as a symptom of a disease which had to be politically fought. The harsh terms of the 21 Conditions, which called for a *purge* of reformist elements, and the expulsion of Paul



Ernest Mandel

Levy for publicly expressing his differences with the KPD leadership (even though Levy was right on the issue!), testify to this. Lenin, like the international Spartacist tendency, sought to construct a democratic centralist international based on genuine programmatic agreement and with real international discipline -- as expressed in the founding documents of the Fourth International in 1938.

Mandel managed to get a little beyond his usual mystifications and banalities when, challenged by members of the Spartacist League both outside the Sydney public meeting and during the public meeting in Melbourne, he claimed that the *Unidad Popular* (UP) government of Allende in Chile was

not a popular front. But in 1971 a *unanimous* declaration of the USec said that it was ("Chile: the Coming Confrontation", *Socialist Review*, May 1972)! Now he argues that the workers in Chile all knew that the Socialist and Communist parties were "hegemonic" in the UP coalition so that the call for these parties to break from the bourgeois parties and rule in their own name was not important. For him the situation was not analogous to Spain in 1938 but to Germany in 1918, because the workers were creating organs of dual power (the cordones industriales which at best can be seen only as embryonic organs of dual power) and thus "bypassing parliament". The example of Germany 1918 is a smokescreen to avoid the key issue: how can the faith of the masses in their reformist misleadership -- explicitly linked to the capitalist system -- be broken?

Mandel curiously forgot the example of the Russian Revolution where the workers were both armed (as in Spain) and had created organs of dual power (the Soviets) and where Lenin and the Bolsheviks put forward the key slogan of "down with the ten capitalist ministers". The essence of a popular front, or coalition of bourgeois and workers' parties, is not at all any specific configuration of ministers but as Trotsky said the political subordination of the working class to the left wing of the exploiters. The Chilean workers' belief in the hegemony of the reformists in the coalition was *itself an illusion* -- the UP was openly bound hand and foot by the presence in it of the "shadow of the bourgeoisie". All the more valid for Chile was the Leninist tactic of demanding that the reformists take power in their own name. Mandel's notion that the existence of potential organs of dual power made it possible to bypass the popular front is only a refusal to confront the political hegemony of the reformists in the class.

The obverse of this search for a substitute to conscious Leninist leadership is open capitulation to popular frontism. And this is exactly what the French USec group, the Front Communiste Revolutionnaire, did when it supported the candidate of the French Union of the Left in the last French Presidential elections. Mandel's USec, rotten with revisionism, is capable only of aiding the betrayers of the class. ■

## Closed platforms . . .

amendments, including one that all groups in the CDC have the opportunity to speak at the demonstration. The SWL, SWAG, CPA voted *against* this amendment, and the CL voted against their co-"internationalist" Painter's motion along with the SL and one CPA member. The SWL/CPA tried to justify themselves by saying the speakers were not to put a political line, and that the demonstration was no place for programmatic debate -- precisely the excuse used by the Stalinists in the Sydney CSCP!

Rather than submit without a struggle to these political exclusions, the SL campaigned for open platforms in both cities. In Sydney, a statement supporting the demonstration and demanding an open platform at LAN Chile was endorsed by Peter McGregor, Mike Matterson and Dorothy Coates of the Sydney Anarchist Group; Bob Gould; NSW MLA George Petersen; Henry Mayer, a professor at Sydney University; David Scott (AMMU member); T Parnell (Hurstville Resident Action Group); Peter Tieman, Rod Pickette, Brian Dale (YLA members); the Spartacist League; and a number of individuals. Also approached were the Healyite Socialist Labour League (SLL); the Glebe-Balmain branch of the CPA; the Newcastle Young Communists; the Pablo-Pabloite Revolutionary Marxist Tendency (RMT); and Jim Baird and Senator Gietzelt, two of the scheduled CSCP speakers. The SWL and CL refused to support the statement. The Glebe-Balmain CPA pleaded unclarity on the events, after the intervention of Denis Freney against an open platform. Baird explicitly rejected an open platform. Gietzelt professed his "sympathy" but refused to do anything on grounds of expediency. Also chickening out was the RMT, because they did not want to be identified with the issue during the "crucial" Leichhardt Council election campaign then in progress. Chile is not as important as the elections, said Eric Sandblom, and during the period of the campaign he did not want to be associated with "outside activities"! The SLL rejected not only an open platform but the demonstration as a whole, in a criminal abstention from concrete action in defence of Chilean workers. At the demonstration, the SL carried signs and distributed literature protesting against the closed platform.

In Melbourne, the two other groups initially opposed to the exclusionary platform, the CL and (after changing its mind) the SWAG first agreed to help fight it. But the CL, always eager to discard principles, almost immediately bailed out, claiming that the campaign for an open platform was "red unionism"! Although SWAG exerted little effort, they supported the campaign, and a SWAG supporter carried a sign in support of workers' democracy at the demonstration as part of an SL-organised picket. Also joining the picket were members of the syndicalist F7 group. In addition the SL circulated a petition that all organisations endorsing the demands of the demonstration should have equal speaking time from the platform on September 11. In addition to being endorsed by SL, SWAG and F7, it was signed by a total of 30 individuals including Rod Taylor (LaTrobe Communist Club), Shubi Ishemo (LaTrobe History Department), Terry Boseley (AMMU), Rod Moran, Ken Carr (Victorian Secretary, Furnishing Trades Society of Australasia), P Maloney (PKIU, Irish Workers Association), AH Khudruj (Palestine Action Committee), and Les Dalton and DM Dalton (CICD).

The political motivation of the exclusions is clear not only from the content of the speeches from the platform -- not so much as a mention of Allende's treacherous role or the need for a revolutionary party in Chile, and only a bare mention by Mandel that some class collaboration had taken place -- but also from the selection of speakers based on a criterion of reformist prominence. And Robertson gives as one of the reasons for rejecting open platforms that the CPA "cannot agree" with the position of the Spartacist League that "the responsibility for the tragic defeat of the workers' movement by the military in Chile... lies with the reformist leadership of the working class." (quoted by Robertson from our leaflet of 6 September). Robertson goes on to say,

"THE KEY RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE TRAGIC DEFEAT

OF THE WORKERS' MOVEMENT, THE ALLENDE GOVERNMENT AND THE FORCES OF POPULAR UNITY WAS THE MULTINATIONALS, THE C.I.A. AND UNITED STATES INSPIRED REACTION -- as recent US Congress disclosures have proven beyond a doubt." (emphasis in original)

By this criterion, the Bolsheviks should have given up in 1917, and the Mensheviks absolved of their betrayals. For the forces arrayed against the Russian Revolution were as significant as those against Allende. Had the Bolsheviks been unable to force Kerensky to arm the workers in July 1917 he would have been smashed by Kornilov and the Soviets crushed. Allende *consistently opposed* arming the Chilean workers and peasants and attempted to put them off guard with nostrums about the democratic military -- as did Corvalan of the Chilean CP. Unlike the CPA, we think the workers and peasants *could have defeated* even the "multinationals, the CIA and US inspired reaction" along with their "own" exploiters and smashed capitalism, if they had not been cruelly betrayed by the class collaboration of their leaders, Robertson's friends, and principally Allende. Reformists like the CPA and (in spite of its orthodox squeaks) the SWL were indeed much afraid that the "unity" of their "solidarity" behind the Chilean reformists' treachery would be "disrupted" by the revolutionary criticism of the SL. Reformism and political exclusionism go hand in hand.

The purpose of actions such as the September 11 demonstrations is to unite to the extent possible the entire workers movement to defend itself concretely against attacks of the class enemy. This includes the solidarity of workers around the world, as the proletariat is an international class and in particular the defeat of the revolution in Chile, while not total, was a severe setback for the revolution internationally. However, for Marxists, episodic defence actions cannot be isolated from the strategic goal of socialist revolution. And for Leninists, for the revolution to be successful the revolutionary party must gain the support initially of the key advanced sections of the class and in a revolutionary situation of the great majority for its program, by exposing the present misleaders of the class. This is impossible if on the one hand, the Marxist vanguard refuses to join in united defensive actions, thereby eliminating any opportunity to demonstrate to the class in practice the dangers of reformism; or, on the other hand, if the vanguard abandons its independence and suppresses its revolutionary program for the sake of a spurious "unity" behind the program of the betrayers.

The first course is followed by the SLL which has consistently refused to have anything to do with any action against the Chilean Junta. While the SLL now takes refuge behind an irrelevant literary metaphor ("Anniversaries can be celebrated, or mourned", *Workers News*, 19 September 1974) it has a standing position against any joint action "with Stalinists" (including the many Stalinist *workers* at the LAN Chile demonstration) and therefore demands that all participants in any action agree with the slogan, "down with the UP". This is the best way to *maintain* the authority of the Stalinists. *Workers News* further says that in "no other way can the heroic Chilean workers be assisted by the proletariat of the world" than by "the building of a revolutionary movement among their own working class". Indeed? The Bolshevik government in

Russia might very well have fallen in 1919 if the British bourgeoisie had not been restrained by the threat of strike action by British workers against their plan for an expeditionary force. The SLL would have said, "forget the (heroic) Russian workers state! It has nothing to do with *our* revolution!" Here is the opportunist side of the sectarian coin -- a descent into opportunist national parochialism.

The opposite sin is committed by the CL -- liquidating the vanguard into the united front with a syndicalist's faith that "solidarity" will of itself propel workers to revolutionary consciousness. The centrist CL has apparently adopted a peculiar "theory" of the united front, which they say only applies to mass organisations. Formally this position is a mere terminological quibble. The CL grasps at it to defend its liquidation of even its own faulty version of a Trotskyist program in "solidarity actions" so as not to be "disruptive". This tailism has now led them into effective support (active in Sydney, passive and inconsistent in Mel-



Salvador Allende -- refused to arm workers

bourne) for the suppression of workers' democracy -- ie of those such as the SL which refuse to abandon the revolutionary program.

There is no difference in principle between the September 11 actions and united fronts on a larger scale. Revolutionaries use the opportunity to expose misleaders while joining the struggle. The suppression of an open platform by the CPA, SWL, SPA, and CL is a practical admission that their politics cannot stand up to criticism. Their appetites to play the same role in Australia as that of the Chilean UP (or in the case of the CL) that of the centrist MIR which tailed the UP, produce an irresistible urge to protect the authority of the UP. But that is precisely why reformism is organically opposed to workers' democracy.

In this case, it is easy to see how workers' democracy serves the absolutely vital function of advancing political clarity. The consequences of inhibiting it can be seen in the case of the MIR, which in its centrist confusion has been disoriented by the coup; and the many subjectively revolutionary militants it undoubtedly contains have now been drawn into the promotion of political blocs with agents of the bourgeoisie, with the MIR's recent right turn (see *Workers Vanguard*, 23 September 1974). Thus the closed platforms on September 11 have done a definite material disservice to the Chilean revolution. ■

CONTINUED FROM PAGE THREE

## Housewives' wage . . .

Robertson is willing to accept a housewives' wage *only after* adequate child-care facilities become available. But it is precisely because the alternative of child care does not *now* exist that the housewives' wage would benefit many working-class women *now*, because without access to child care they are hindered from getting jobs, and the family unit economically burdened down by the cost of supporting children. Critical support for the housewives' wage -- demanding that the Labor reformists carry through on it while explaining its inadequacy and warning against its use to encourage male chauvinism -- need not diminish the struggle for child care by

one iota, unless like Robertson you operate from reformist premises. Robertson's (equivocating) opposition, an exception for the reformist CPA, reflects the fact that this is one reform that the forces she is tailing, the WEL feminists, resist -- for the wrong reasons.

The third paper is "Wages for Housework" by Guiliana Pompei of Italy (translated by Joan Hall, reprinted from the American feminist publication *Women: A Journal of Liberation*, no 3 vol 3). In contrast to the vacillations of Robertson or the open bourgeois feminism of the WEL papers, Pompei at least has a coherent, if totally wrong, political line, derived from theories of Mariarosa Dalla Costa. (For a Marxist critique of the pamphlet "The Power of Women and the Subversion of the Community" by Dalla Costa and Selma James, see *Women and Revolution* no 5, 1974, available for 25¢ from the Spartacist League.) Pompei takes up Dalla Costa's central theme that housewives are productive workers and emphasises the demand "wages for housework" (which Dalla Costa herself does not stress). Instead of rejecting housewives wages on principle like some other feminists, Pompei demands them on principle.

Dalla Costa/Pompei argue that the family is a centre of capitalist production, "the domestic labour power factory" (Pompei); and that housework is productive labour in that it produces "surplus value" (Dalla Costa). The worker himself is equated with his labour power as the commodity produced by the housewife in the family. The argument goes that this fact has been obscured in large part because women have not been paid a wage for their work:

"Inside the home we saw our *invisible work*,

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## SWAG . . .

the Stalinist bureaucracy but analysed them in process. At the same time he pointed out that to recognise this scarcely meant abandoning the Trotskyist program of *political revolution* in the USSR (and by extension, the other deformed workers states):

"No one has said that the Soviet bureaucracy *always and everywhere* either wishes or is able to accomplish the expropriation of the bourgeoisie. We only say that no other government could have accomplished that social overturn which the Kremlin bureaucracy notwithstanding its alliance with Hitler found itself compelled to sanction in eastern Poland. Failing this, it could not include the territory of the Federation in the USSR." (Trotsky, *In Defense of Marxism*, p 131)

It is not only possible to explain the postwar events by extending, rather than rejecting, Trotsky's analysis; it is the only consistently revolutionary analysis, while Shachtman's capitulation had *directly counter-revolutionary implications*.

### SHACHTMAN SIDES WITH US IMPERIALISM

Perhaps the clearest indication of this fact is SWAG's *deviation* from its own theory in its position on Vietnam, its opportunist appetites to capitalise on petty-bourgeois radicalism conflicting with its third-camp Stalinophobia. SWAG, like the IS (US), supported the military victory of the NLF -- while denying that an NLF government would be any different to the present regime (see "Red Inc", *SWAG Discussion Bulletin* no 2). Attempting to justify their position on the grounds of support for self-determination in Vietnam, they ignore the class nature of the conflict -- a *civil war* of the Vietnamese workers and peasants against the landlords and capitalists and their imperialist protectors. Moreover they contradict their own theory. During the Korean War prior to the Chinese intervention, an analogous case, Shachtman sided vehemently with American imperialism (see *New Internationalist* [the American Shachtmanite journal], July-August 1950, p 196). Shachtman gave a repeat performance in 1954 on the war in Vietnam:

"We reject any notion that the interests of the Indochinese people require the *military or political support* of the Vietminh against the French. The Vietminh is decisively dominated by its Stalinist leadership and functions in practice as the power instrument of Stalinist imperialism in Indochina." (*New Internationalist*, July-August 1954, p 196) (emphasis added)

The identification of Bolshevism with usurping Stalinism in order to conciliate and capitulate to liberalism and anti-communism is precisely a characteristic of social democracy. And Shachtman found it impossible to evade the political logic of his break from Marxism, which achieved final consummation when he took his organisation into the pro-imperialist American Socialist Party in 1958 on the following basis:

"We do not subscribe to any creed known as Leninism or defined as such. We do not sub-

the enormous quantity of work that women are forced to perform every day in order to produce and reproduce the labour force, the invisible -- because unpaid -- foundation upon which the whole pyramid of capitalism rests." (Pompei) (emphasis in original)

For a Marxist, under capitalism not the labourer but his labour power is a commodity. Only in slave societies is the labourer *per se* a commodity. *Wage-slavery* was one of the essential innovations of capitalism, because of its *superiority* for capitalism over slave or feudal forms of exploitation.

This underlies the fact that domestic work in the *bourgeois* family is completely *isolated* from the productive process, and the ahistorical premises of Dalla Costa/Pompei lack this understanding. Two key concepts form the basis of their theory of women as productive workers -- their production of the labourer/labour power (ie, child-raising and servicing the husband/worker) and their role in consumption -- shopping, cooking, etc. The argument that these two aspects of housework produce surplus value ignores two crucial distinctions made by Marx. These are (1) the difference between industrial and *private* consumption (ie, family consumption) and (2) the difference between productive labour under capitalism -- wage labour for a capitalist generating surplus value used in the accumulation of capital -- and simple work, which produces only use value.

The program Pompei offers is one of "rejecting" housework and for a struggle "not to become more productive, not to go off and be exploited better somewhere else, but to work less and to have more opportunity for social and political

scribe to any creed known as Trotskyism or defined as such." (*New Internationalist*, spring-summer 1958)

He was joined in the SP by the principal founders of the organisation later reconstituted as the American IS, including Hal Draper, Sy Landy, and Tom Weir.

The left social-democratic character of the SWAG, which still pretends to honour the memory of Lenin and Trotsky, can be seen most clearly in its attitude toward the ALP, which resembles closely that of the Socialist Workers League (see *ASP*, June 1974). An article in *Front Line* (May 1974) by Greg McCrae explicitly and rather crassly rejects the Leninist tactic of entrenchment, calling for a *strategic* entry in the ALP, but failing at his clumsy attempt to give SWAG's opportunism a left cover. Previously, SWAG was quite explicit in seeking to pressure Whitlam to the left:

"All these demands [including 30 hours work for 40 hours pay and nationalisation of industry without compensation under workers control] could be met by a Labor government if it was forced to by a working class mass push for them." (*Hard Lines*, 26 October 1972)

"But the Labor Party can be forced to defend the basic interests of the working class in a way that the Liberals cannot...." (*The Battler*, 17 November 1972)

Now McCrae tries to put forward a more orthodox version:

"One is not trying to move the formal leadership to the left, but one is trying to push a formal opposition to the left, not with the aim of eventually replacing right bureaucrats with left bureaucrats, but with the aim of creating a split in the Labor Party which will allow a movement to defend the working class to develop, which will retain the leadership of the class." (*Front Line*, May 1974)

This signifies at best to work for the creation of a new *centrist* party which "will allow" itself to be pushed farther to the left, a concession of McCrae/SWAG to the obvious absurdity of saying that Whitlam can be forced to institute socialism. However this policy is *in practice* no different from what the SWAG has always called for, the tailing of fake-left oppositions within the Labor Party such as the Socialist Left in Victoria.

But perhaps SWAG has had a change of heart? **On the contrary; McCrae defends the policy in *The Battler*, but he does so by lying about what that policy was:**

"[the "left" split from the ALP "allowing" a "movement to defend and lead the working class to develop"] is only possible if at the same time revolutionaries maintain their independent organisation outside the ALP, organising at an industrial level. Thus the slogan we raised during the 1972 Federal elections -- to build a movement inside and outside the Labor Party to fight the Labor leaders."

Not so! *The Battler* put forward only a *minimum reform program* in opposition to Whitlam and said: "Build a mass movement inside and outside the Labor Party, to force the Labor leadership to defend the working class!" (*The Battler*, 17 Novem-

ber 1972). A tendency which attempts to defend its wretched policies by falsifying its record in this blatant fashion deserves only contempt.

experience". Certainly a legitimate desire, and one shared by all the oppressed and exploited. But to dream of its satisfaction unless capitalism is smashed, allowing a leap forward in the productive forces of humanity, is sheer utopianism. In practice, utopianism is inevitably transformed into reformist evolution: Pompei does not propose to *end* the channeling of women into the special role of domestic slavery through the integration of women on an equal footing into the productive life of society, but has only a program to *mitigate* that oppression under capitalism -- social services and wage demands. Without an understanding of capitalist class society and the unique revolutionary role of the proletariat, all concrete programmatic demands become mere cosmetic reforms, whose effect is to buttress the system.

Radical or "socialist" feminists who counterpose to Labor's token reforms such measures as child care, socially provided laundries and so on, or the fight for abortion reform, are incapable of pursuing these goals, as they are hindered by their *class-collaborationist* ideology. The linking of women's liberation to the proletarian struggle against capitalism can only be forged by the creation of a *communist women's movement*, based on a class line rather than sexually exclusionist, to mobilise working-class women in support of a *transitional program* connecting the struggle against their oppression to the class struggle as a whole and to the need for workers power. Unless such a movement is built, overcoming sexual barriers within the class, under the leadership of a Leninist party, the overthrow of capitalism necessary to smash the oppression of women cannot occur. ■

The statement in *Front Line* no 1 that "to mobilise the working class means a determined assault on the labour bureaucracy, not an attempt to slip around it or accommodate to it" is likewise a complete fraud which can be seen by examining briefly SWAG's own trade union work, which is explicitly based on reformist militancy, the catchcries of an alternative sellout bureaucracy and not an alternative revolutionary leadership. For instance, according to an article in *The Battler* on the VSTA, referring to the "oppositional" grouping wholly endorsed by SWAG called *Teacher Action* and headed by Tom O'Lincoln:

"For next year it is developing a set of reform policies to put forward at the annual general meeting. For teachers concerned with changing the VSTA, *Teacher Action* is the group to join."

SWAG also supports the pan-union newsletter *Clerk and Dagger*, and *Micoey Firm*, a newsletter of the Militant Insurance Clerks (MIC), a rank-and-file group in the Australian Insurance Staff's Federation (AISF). *Clerk and Dagger*, purporting to "print the news and raise hell", is directed at Melbourne white-collar workers in the AISF, Federated Clerks Union, the Bank Officers Association and the ACOA, but is little more than a militant gossip sheet devoid of any real programmatic content. Although it has on rare occasions raised a program as far left (perhaps slightly more) as that of a Wedgewood-Benn (see *Clerk and Dagger*, 24 August 1973), it seeks to build an opposition to the bureaucrats in the most economist way, purely on immediate day-to-day issues. The MIC describes itself as follows:

"What is MIC?... We stand for --

"A Militant Union...

"A Democratic Union -- its strength built on the deliberate activity of the rank and file....

"A socially conscious union -- ...

"A union that supports the struggles of other unions...."

This falls short even of the politics of the Socialist Left!

According to SWAG a left wing bureaucracy is better than a right wing one because revolutionaries can force them to fight. As Flaherty explained:

"4. Normally at this point we shouldn't become union leaders ourselves, but *push* others who are more representative of the consciousness workers *can achieve at this point*. This may mean CPA types at best, or leftist ALP or even centre ALP in the case of some unions." [emphasis added] (*MWG Discussion Bulletin* no 1, 8 November 1972) !!

SWAG's stages theory of consciousness leads to promoting open labour traitors instead of warning against them, blaming workers who "cannot achieve" an understanding of them. This liquidationist economism flows directly from SWAG's rejection of the role of revolutionary leadership and the vanguard party, and is summed up well in Lenin's description of the Russian Economists:

"[to the Economists,] that struggle is desirable which is possible, and the struggle which is possible is that which is going on at the given moment. This is precisely the trend of unbounded opportunism, which passively adapts itself to spontaneity." (Lenin, *What is To Be Done?*)

It is counterposed to the communist method of organising caucuses in the unions on the basis of the revolutionary program -- the transitional program -- leading workers to the consciousness that they need proletarian rule. SWAG determines its program not by the objective tasks of the entire proletariat but by the subjective limitations of the existing consciousness of simple isolated trade-union struggles. In so doing, it ends up with the old social-democratic minimum/maximum program of Bernstein and Kautsky, the "minimum" for mass consumption in the unions and the "maximum" reserved for solemn occasions or empty proclamations on campus. ■

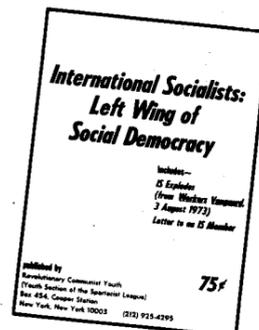
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# September 11 Chile defence actions: Closed platforms push reformist illusions

On 11 September, demonstrations against the repression in Chile took place as scheduled in several locations in Australia. The way in which these actions were carried out, however, ensured that, whatever effect they may have had in defending Chilean workers, illusions were perpetuated in the policies championed by Allende of coalition with the left wing of the exploiters, policies which left the Chilean workers defenceless against last year's military coup. Because all criticism of Allende was eliminated from the speaking platforms in both Melbourne and Sydney, and because of the implicit or explicit support for Allende by some speakers, these speaking platforms were effectively transformed into organs for popular-frontist propaganda. Because of this, the actions were unable to aid the process of political conflict necessary if the defeat suffered by the international working class in Chile is not to be repeated.

This situation did not arise overnight, and all of the major left-wing political tendencies involved in organising the actions are directly responsible for the outcome. In the case of the supposedly Trotskyist Socialist Workers League (SWL) and Communist League (CL), their deliberate connivance in or approval of the outright suppression of workers' democracy, and their self-inflicted political liquidation, themselves promoting the absence of their own putative political views, constitutes a sharp and scandalous proof of their renegacy from Trotskyism. In the case of the Communist Party of Australia (CPA) and the Socialist Party of Australia (SPA) it is simply one more among their countless betrayals. The exclusionist policies were consistently fought only by the Spartacist League, which at the same time consistently supported the principled basis for the demonstrations and participated in the actions -- actively upholding both the urgent need for international working-class solidarity and unbending revolutionary criticism of the misleaders of the class.

The background manoeuvres in Sydney have been the subject of lengthy leaflet polemics often typified by wholesale falsifications as various revisionists have attempted to avoid embarrassment or cover their tracks. It is necessary to "set the record straight" once again; but more importantly to reveal the roots of their actions and how they conflict with a revolutionary application of the united front. Those like the CPA's Mavis Robertson who "deplore" or "regret" having to deal with these questions have good reason to -- but not because it interferes with working-class solidarity. On the contrary, it is they who have disrupted solidarity by trying to impose their political views, and they attempt to evade an exposure of this fact by appealing to the urgency of practical action. That will not do.

The planned demonstration in Sydney was seriously undermined by the exclusionist, undemocratic behaviour of the Committee for Solidarity with the Chilean People (CSCP), a coalition dedicated to the return of a new *Unidad Popular* (UP) government to power in Chile, and by the capitulation to their tactics, and later adoption of the same tactics, by the majority of the September 11 Chile Action Committee (CAC), chiefly the SWL and the CL. The SL was originally a part of the CAC in both Sydney and Melbourne. In accord with the norms of a genuine united front the CAC initially made no attempt to impose a common political line on participants beyond the stated aims (see *ASp*, August 1974, "Stop the repression in Chile!"), which all those who claim to speak in the interests of the working class can support in a principled fashion. Exhaustive attempts were made to collaborate with the CSCP initially through Dave Holmes of the SWL on behalf of the CAC, and later by a CAC delegation. Instead of cooperating the CSCP first sought to pre-empt any joint action by calling its own de-

monstration at LAN Chile for September 11 in a leaflet reflecting its own pro-Allende politics (with a picture of Allende under the heading, "For Chile Venceremos -- Chile Solidarity Committee", coupled with the slogan, "democracy in Chile"). A leaflet, "Solidarity with Chile -- not Sectarianism over Chile" authorised by Mavis Robertson and published by the CPA, claims that the CSCP had made its decision before being approached by the CAC. But even if true, this is completely irrelevant; the decision to go ahead was a deliberate effort to prevent a coordinated demonstration by presenting the CAC with a fait accompli. The CAC nevertheless obtained agreement for joint publicity for a demonstration beginning at LAN Chile, with a march and a second rally at Martin Plaza to be organised by the CAC. The CAC was led to believe that the speaking platform to be provided by the CSCP at LAN Chile would be open, that is, would not exclude any political tendency from speaking, and a poster was produced advertising the whole demonstration under the names of both committees.

However the Stalinist Socialist Party of Australia (SPA), which had become the main force behind the CSCP, insisted that no speaker criti-

allowed but specifically invited or encouraged to put their views. We have never at any time said that "cooperation with the CSCP was impossible because of the latter's aims" -- an absurd invention in light of the efforts of the CAC to induce cooperation from the CSCP on the same basis as in the March demonstration. We said only that we refuse to help propagate or to support the CSCP's false views.

To the CPA/SPA/SWL charges of threatened "disruption" of the demonstration, we can only repeat what we said in our leaflet of 6 September: "The real disrupters are the CSCP and its backers. As long as their platform remains closed, the Spartacist League will seek to prevent the suppression of workers' democracy by building support for an alternative open platform at LAN Chile to be provided by the SL. We call on all those committed to the defence of the Chilean proletariat to support such an open platform.... There is absolutely no reason why an open platform need cause any disruption whatever.... We call for absolute rejection of any violent clash, which would discredit the demonstration. It is still possible that the CSCP can be convinced to open its platform. We

The closed platform at LAN Chile: praise for Allende and the popular front road. Standing behind platform is SPA member, Terry Hickman. (photo: *ASp*)



cal of Allende would be permitted on their platform, and refused even to allow for a single speaker from any organisation in the CAC. Robertson's attempt to blame this on the CAC (which supposedly demanded "that the CSC JOIN THEM" and who "say it is all a communist plot" and so on) is puerile and slanderous. Her red-baiting charge is a bald-faced lie. The actions of the SPA fit into a consistent pattern. In March of this year, the SPA at first refused to back the trade-union "fact-finding" delegation to Chile. The SPA did not take part in a demonstration at Sydney Airport on 23 March -- called by the same CSCP they now promote -- to see the union delegation off; and they likewise boycotted the Melbourne demonstration to defend the MIR militants on 22 March. Robertson writes in her leaflet,

"Last March, the Spartacist League (SL) attended a few meetings of the CSC and made proposals concerning actions in support of specific political prisoners [which Robertson opposed]. Their members attended a CSC-sponsored demonstration for the release of all political prisoners when the trade union delegation left for Chile. The SL did not mention then that cooperation with the Chile Solidarity Committee was impossible because of the latter's aims." This is deliberately misleading. The SL (unlike the CPA) not only attended but actively built that demonstration, among other things producing and distributing several thousand leaflets. There was a principled basis of cooperation in this case only because the SL insisted on it, with the result that at the rally, where the speakers were organised by the SL, and members of the SL and also the CL substantially outnumbered members of the CPA, all tendencies were not only

could only welcome such a development, which would make an alternative platform unnecessary."

The SWL and CL first capitulated to the CSCP by refusing to support this policy of fighting politically for an open platform, precipitating the departure of the SL from the CAC. A five-page leaflet then appeared under the name of the CAC ("For a united defence of democratic rights in Chile! Against exclusionism and sectarianism!", 28 August 1974) in order to hide their surrender. Waxing indignant over the closed platform, it said:

"At a stormy meeting the CSC adopted a proposal for a platform which was completely exclusive of the forces represented by the CAC as it is. ... They justify this on the grounds that people get bored with too many speakers and there must be no 'political' speakers on it. The current CSC platform certainly has political speakers on it, but they are 'hidden' behind trade union affiliations.... The CAC simply argued for a platform which represented all the currents supporting the action on the main demands.... It is simply an application of workers democracy in the given situation." (emphasis added)

But the incredible hypocrisy of the SWL/CL was exposed when the SWL with breath-taking cynicism itself set up a closed platform for the demonstration in Melbourne, and the following week announced that the SWL/CL platform at Martin Plaza was to be closed as well! And this after saying,

"A genuinely representative platform for a united demonstration might include speakers from the various political currents..." (28 August CAC leaflet)

and after specifically and publicly pledging that the Martin Plaza platform "will in the first place represent those forces excluded from the CSC platform" (*Direct Action*, 2 September 1974)!

In Melbourne, SWL member Steve Painter at a 5 September meeting of the Chile Defence Committee (Melbourne version of the CAC) moved for a platform limited to two Chileans, Neil McLean (AUS left liberal), McMann (a journalist), CPA member Roger Wilson (Seamen's Union), and left ALPer Brian McKinley. The SL at that meeting foreshadowed a motion to be put were Painter's motion to fail: "that the basis of the committee is the five demands and that all participating organisations have equal speaking time at the September 11 demonstration." Voting for the SWL's exclusionist motion, which passed, were the Socialist Workers Action Group (SWAG) and CPA members. (SWAG later decided that it was in favour of an open platform after all.) The Melbourne CL opposed the SWL's motion, putting two

Continued on page six

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