

# Australasian SPARTACIST



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## No to protectionist, reformist traps!

# Expropriate Leylands!

**No layoffs; for a sliding scale of hours; for occupation of Leylands—Zetland!  
For a car-industry-wide strike against layoffs! For workers' control of Leylands!  
Not protectionist tariffs or quotas but international working-class organisation!  
Nationalise the car industry under workers' control! No compensation!**

On 10 October, after seven weeks of secret negotiations with the Labor government, Leyland Australia announced that it will shut down completely its car manufacturing plant at Zetland in Sydney. Leyland's new managing director, David Abell, estimated that the closure will eliminate "significantly more than 3000" Leylands jobs by Christmas. The almost total end to Australian car production by Leyland is likely to cost an additional 7000 jobs in the car industry due to retrenchments by the 400-odd companies that supply Leylands. Workers sacked at Leylands join an army of unemployed now growing at a rate of 1000 a day, who face an annual inflation rate that has now jumped to 22 percent.

The Leylands closure is only the most spectacular of a wide range of cutbacks by employers faced with drooping profit figures and tight credit, the consequences of the current international capitalist economic crisis. Leylands, the weakest of the four multinationals who monopolise Australian car production, had its own peculiar problems, but its collapse cannot be viewed as the inevitable fate of a hopelessly sick company; it is symptomatic. The weak points are only the first to collapse under pressure. The developing recession has hit the car industry internationally especially hard, with large-scale layoffs in France, Italy, West Germany and the US, and the remaining Australian "big three" -- GMH, Ford and Chrysler -- are in for bad times in the future.

The months-long talks with the government remained a secret until admitted by Assistant PM Jim Cairns on 2 October. During this period Cabinet must have known about the threat to jobs, yet they did nothing whatsoever to answer it. Instead they agreed to the sackings and offered Leyland more than \$25 million for the land occupied by the factory and 800 unsold new cars -- extravagant generosity for land valued at \$15 million and cars worth no more than \$3 million! Needless to say the workers thrown onto the dole were never consulted by these pro-capitalist parliamentarians -- who claim to represent the labour movement.

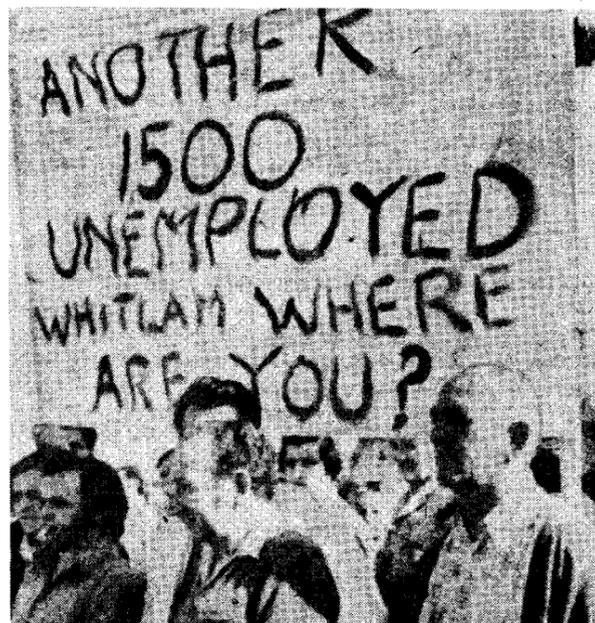
To accept the layoffs without challenge would be to prepare the way for further defeats for the working class. Car workers must not only demand repudiation of the Whitlam-Leyland deal. The only way to stop the layoffs at Leylands is immediate occupation of the plant. However, unless such a move is backed up by strong industrial action throughout the car industry and the labour movement, it will inevitably be smashed. At a minimum the Vehicle Builders' Employees' Federation (VBEF) must organise a car-industry-wide strike against the Leylands shutdown, demanding nationalisation without compensation and a 30-hour week with no cut in weekly pay for all car workers -- a sliding scale of hours to spread the available work and maintain full employment at the bosses' expense. Occupation of Leylands Zetland makes workers control of Leylands an immediate necessity. In order to sustain an occupation or work-in Leyland workers will have to take over central aspects of the factory's operations, establishing a factory-wide democratically-elected committee embracing all Leylands workers for this purpose.

Such a class-struggle defence of car workers' jobs would bring about a confrontation with the bourgeois state, including the reformist misleadership of the Labor Party, posing the need to replace them with a leadership committed to ending the capitalist system of exploitation by expropriating the bosses.

The leadership of the VBEF did nothing to prepare car workers to fight the long-predicted layoffs at Zetland. When 1000 workers were sacked in June, they demurred quietly, and their response to the blatant political sackings of at least two groups of militants (one in February

and again in August) was inaction at best -- with strong evidence of VBEF officials' complicity. Reacting to pressure from the ranks, NSW VBEF Secretary Joe Thompson called a stopwork meeting at Leylands on 9 October and put a motion calling for nationalisation, increased import quotas, a ban on work transfer from Zetland to Leyland's Enfield plant, and opposition to all retrenchments. One shop steward warned that "it will take the police to drag us out of here". But while Thompson is willing to put an occasional militant-sounding resolution, the VBEF bureaucrats have avoided at all costs any mobilisation of workers for a real fight against the layoffs. Nationalisation to Thompson is not really different from inviting a Japanese company to take over the plant. Even this was too much for RE Wilson, VBEF Federal Secretary, who said that it was time "trade union officials had sufficient guts to tell the workers that the Government has not got the power to nationalise the industry".

The VBEF leadership is relying on pressure for greater protective measures to preserve the car industry from foreign competition -- a plan to maintain the jobs of Australian workers at the expense of their class brothers overseas. This



is part of a widespread protectionist campaign by the trade-union bureaucracy replete with thinly-veiled racist slurs against "cheap" Asian or Japanese labour. The VBEF officials' plan to seek a Japanese company to keep the Zetland

Continued on page three

## Bosses' courts won't stop Gallagher/MBA attack

# For class defence of NSW BLF!

The entire workers movement must unite to defend the NSW Builders' Labourers' Federation (BLF) against the co-ordinated union-bashing assaults of BLF Federal Secretary Norm Gallagher of the Maoist CPA-ML and the Master Builders' Association (MBA). Growing unemployment in the building industry -- entering its worst slump in 13 years -- gives the MBA a golden opportunity to



16 October -- colleagues share a joke. Left to right: Gallagher, Mundy, Owens.

destroy the union whose militancy has plagued them for a decade. But neither Gallagher nor the NSW Branch officials have done anything to save jobs.

Whatever the details of the collusion between Gallagher and the MBA, there is no doubt that the MBA has seized on Gallagher's bureaucratic, undemocratic attacks against the NSW Branch and its elected leadership as the right time to deliver a death blow to the union, culminating in an anti-union campaign begun in earnest last October. Because of its militancy and its "green ban" policies, the NSW Branch has earned the hatred of

most of the ruling class. Apart from apparently groundless claims of financial chicanery by NSW officials, Gallagher's case rests on the charge that Mundy/Owens' green bans have "gone too far". Many of the green bans are useless or reactionary-utopian schemes, that should be opposed by revolutionaries. However, Gallagher opposes the green bans solely to protect his reformist "respectability". The MBA, inspired by the stage-managed Sydney debut of "Big Norm", announced it would break the green bans with scab labour. All workers must defend the green bans, even though wrong, against the class enemy!

When the BLF was deregistered on 21 June, Gallagher bellowed "Tremendous, at last they have cut the chains of arbitration from us". Now Gallagher is in a hurry to re-register without the NSW Branch! Moreover, Gallagher has actively sought to enlist the aid of the courts to seize the funds and assets of the NSW Branch. He aims to strike a deal with the MBA to recognise only members of his rival branch -- a completely repugnant sellout which, if carried out, would amount to straight-out wholesale scabbing against the legitimate NSW union. On the other hand, Mundy/Owens/Pringle themselves have run to the capitalist courts to stop Gallagher. By calling in the class enemy, they undermine class-based opposition to the Gallagher/MBA deal and encourage intervention by the capitalist state into the workers movement. The "success" of the NSW officials, in obtaining an Equity Court injunction against Gallagher's organisers will benefit only the bosses.

Builders' labourers must reject any alliance with the bosses or their courts, and carry out a political struggle to expose Gallagher, posing to the workers in the Federal "branch" the need for unity against the boss, and avoiding unnecessary confrontations. The NSW Branch must campaign to organise all non-union building workers in NSW, and fight for a sliding scale of hours with no loss in pay and a union hiring hall as immediate measures against sackings. But building workers will remain threatened with the defeat of their unions and erosion of living standards unless the class-collaborationist misleadership of Clancy/Gallagher/Owens is replaced by a revolutionary leadership based on a program of struggle for workers' power, the Trotskyist transitional program. ■

## Portugal at the crossroads . . . p 2

# Portugal at the crossroads

reprinted from Workers Vanguard, no 54, 11 October 1974

... On September 30 General Antonio de Spínola -- symbol of Portugal's half-way liberation from the severe repression of the Salazarist dictatorship -- resigned his post as president, warning that the country was headed toward political and economic chaos and "new forms of slavery from the left". Shortly before his resignation Spínola reportedly attempted to seize power in a palace coup, by declaring a "state of siege" and dismissing the military-leftist government.

Also forced to resign were Generals Galva de Melo, Silveiro Marques and Diego Neto, leaving only three members of the Junta of National Salvation, a body of senior officers chosen by the MFA [Armed Forces Movement], to sit as a second government. General Francisco da Costa Gomes became the new president and was acclaimed by the Communist Party and leftist public opinion, despite the fact that he has long been a supporter and close associate of Spínola.

The generals' resignations followed on the heels of an abortive right-wing demonstration. On September 10 Spínola had called on the "silent majority" to "awaken and to defend itself against extremist totalitarianism which fights in the shadows". A number of conservative groups responded to the call and announced a rally on September 28 in front of the presidential palace.

The demonstration was prevented when leftists set up roadblocks around Lisbon to keep reactionaries out of the city. Cars were searched for arms and some were reportedly found. Buses scheduled to bring demonstrators to the rally were stopped when the bus drivers' union called out its members.

Now rumors circulate of both a brewing right-wing coup to restore Spínola and a plot to assassinate government leaders. Over 200 known supporters of the old regime were recently arrested on the charge of attempting to resurrect a rightist dictatorship.

Portugal stands at the crossroads between proletarian revolution and bloody suppression of the masses. Vacillation now can only aid the counter-revolutionaries.

Despite the best efforts by the Stalinist CP to betray the masses, the Portuguese working class is now in an extraordinarily favorable position. The reactionaries have overplayed their hand, temporarily removing themselves from the governmental triangle (Junta of National Salvation, Armed Forces Movement, Provisional Government). Instead of constituting a renovated junta (as the MFA and CP seek to do), it is necessary to press forward resolutely. Otherwise the forces of Salazarist dictatorship will be able to regroup and prepare their return which, sooner or later, could mean a massacre of the workers on the order of last year's Chilean bloodbath.

The heterogeneous Armed Forces Movement cannot be relied on to prevent a coup, nor will sporadic leftist mobilizations such as on September 28 stop a determined rightist thrust... it is necessary to mobilize the workers in united demonstrations demanding freedom of the press, the right to strike, immediate independence for the colonies and withdrawal of Portuguese troops from Africa, abolition of the officer corps and the junta, immediate elections for a constituent assembly.

Only by uniting workers' defense guards, soldiers' committees, unions and factory committees along with the workers parties in a unitary organization of the working class, a *soviet*, can the exploited masses hope to achieve victory....

The recent confrontation was prepared by a series of disputes between the junta and the MFA. The younger officers complained that Spínola was too slow in pulling troops out of Portugal's African colonies....

Then last July the 21-member, MFA-dominated Council of State refused to grant the premier the right to name his cabinet. Spínola's plan for a plebiscitary election confirming him as president was also rejected. At the end of August the conservatives tried to regain the upper hand by circulating a manifesto demanding abolition of the Armed Forces Coordinating Commission in which the "leftist" officers predominate.

Despite Spínola's charges that the younger officers have become "crypto-communists", the younger officers (like their Communist Party backers) are unwilling to go beyond the limits of capitalism. Although the MFA and CP are now dominant within the government, they will no more be able to deal with Portugal's economic ills -- 30 percent inflation (the highest in Europe), rising unemployment aggravated by the return of colonials and Portuguese working abroad, loss of revenues through decolonization -- than were the two post-April 25 governments before them.

The Stalinists, for their part, are banking everything on an alliance with the "progressive" officers. To the CP freedom of the press, the right to strike and independence for the colonies all must be sacrificed on the altar of unity with the MFA:

"The Provisional Government is not a Popular Government. But in essence it serves the people... despite certain decisions which objectively constitute concessions to the presence of the right, the fundamental general line of the Provisional Government is democratic and progressive." (*Avante!*, 6 September 1974)

And, of course, the CP helps the government "serve the people" by acting as chief strike-breaker! This despicable performance reached a nadir in the postal workers' strike in June, where the CP tried to take over the facilities by organizing goon squads to attack the strikers (see "Portuguese Postal Strike Defeated", *WV* No. 48, 5 July 1974).

## OPPOSITION TO DICTATORIAL DECREES MOUNTS

The recent surge of activity has not been confined to conspiracies in the government palaces. After a short period of relative quiescence, working-class actions have increased over past weeks. In early August three bourgeois newspapers were suspended for merely reporting a demonstration by the Maoist MRPP (Movement for the Reorganization of the Proletarian Party). Faced with threats of a strike by the entire news media, the government backed down. A few days later however, the junta indefinitely suspended the MRPP newspaper, *Luta Popular*, thereby violating its own decree of June 20 (limiting press suspensions to 60 days).

These stringent prohibitions have not prevented workers from walking off their jobs. At the end of August striking workers at TAP (Portugal's airline) demanded the removal not just of former agents of the political police (PIDE) but also of "individuals who have taken anti-working-class positions, like the loyal dogs serving capitalism that they are" (*Revolucão*, 7 September).

Strict decrees regulating the right to strike were also issued in August. Outlawed are political strikes, strikes of solidarity, strikes that seek to upset the terms of a collective bargaining agreement, strikes by public employees, partial strikes in key sections of a plant and plant occupations. No strike can be called until after at least thirty days of negotiations and seven days' notice to the employer. On the other hand, an employer may lock out his employees as long as he gives them seven days' notice.

On September 7 textile workers, joined by TAP workers, construction workers and others, organized a demonstration of 3,000 in Lisbon centering around demands against layoffs and factory closings....

A high point came on September 12 when 7,000 workers marched out of the Lisnave naval shipyard in Almeda, past lines of troops stationed outside the plant to prevent their demonstration, and into the streets of Lisbon. A communication of the Lisnave workers, whose demonstration centered around the demand to "expunge all manifestations of fascism", stated: "We are not with the government when it promulgates anti-working-class laws, restricting the struggle of the workers against capitalist exploitation" (*Revolucão*, 21 September 1974). Among the approved list of de-

mands were: "Death to PIDE -- Death to Fascism -- Down with Capitalism", "Right to Strike, Yes -- Lockout, No" and "Democracy for the Workers -- Repression for the Reactionaries".

The march was carefully planned and held only after repeated unsuccessful attempts to obtain official action against Salazarist elements in the company. (It was over this issue that Lisnave workers struck the shipyards in May.) The CP openly opposed plans for a march, but when a vote was taken by 6,000 workers shortly before the demonstration was to begin, only 25 opposed it. The Stalinists had previously been the strongest political group at Lisnave.

A tense moment came as the columns prepared to leave the yard. Three companies of special commandos, parachutists and military police had surrounded the entrance on government orders to prevent a demonstration. But when the workers began chanting "soldiers are the sons of the people" a number of riflemen broke down. The commander finally let the demonstrators pass rather than risk a confrontation.

## THE KEY: REVOLUTIONARY LEADERSHIP

As the working class is becoming more politically educated, more disillusioned in the provisional government and the Communist Party, the groups to the left of the CP continue to tail behind the workers. While they may raise slogans for the expropriation of industry, for workers control of the monopolies and other demands which go beyond simple democratic rights, they abandon these slogans in the course of the actual workers' battles in favor of "support" to trade-union struggles.

The worst example of this tailism is provided by the workerists of the Proletarian Revolutionary Party (PRP) who continue to insist that the organization of the workers must take place *independently* of political parties. The tasks of a revolutionary Trotskyist vanguard party would be exactly the opposite -- to actively intervene in the workers' struggles with a program of transitional demands which would *lead* the workers to victory.

Such a program would include calling for immediate elections to a constituent assembly, immediate and total independence for Portuguese colonies and withdrawal of colonialist troops, military victory to the MPLA, for the construction of a Leninist vanguard party in Southern Africa. Also, trial of criminals of the Salazarist regime by democratically elected people's tribunals; full freedom of the press, full right to strike and trade-union association, a sliding scale of wages and hours, equal pay for equal work, militant defense of the picket lines, expropriation of the monopolies and banks, workers control of industry, formation of democratically elected factory committees joined in a unitary organization of the working class, a workers government.

All workers parties, trade unions and other working-class organizations must join together to defend what few gains have been made since April 25 and to prevent a full-scale onslaught of frenzied capitalist reaction. The sectarianism of those like the Maoists of the MRPP, who refuse to collaborate with any other group even in the defense of their own victimized militants, is a criminal policy which will only serve to further atomize and isolate the beleaguered Portuguese working class. The demand that the reformist CP and Socialist Party join such a united-front workers defense could be decisive in exposing the true appetites of these class-collaborationist betrayers and in winning large portions of their ranks and followers to the side of genuine working-class struggle.

The Portuguese proletariat is facing a moment of decision. If proper leadership develops in time, the Portuguese working class stands ready to surge forward and overthrow its oppressors. But if revolutionary leadership, i.e., a Trotskyist party crystallized from the most advanced elements of the ostensible left and workers organizations, cannot be constructed in time, the Portuguese experience will simply be one more page in the history book of Stalinist betrayals. ■

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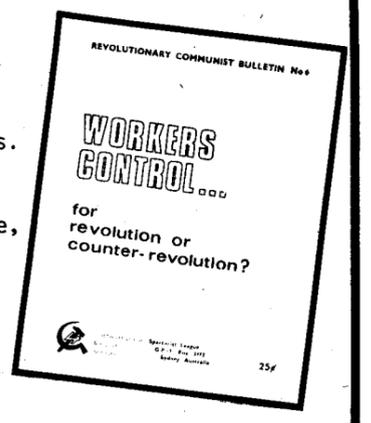
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## "Socialist Feminist"...

The disastrous implications of feminist separatism emerge most clearly in proposals to "feminise the unions and the workers movement", in the words of CPA AMWU shop steward Aileen Beaver. Beaver's paper, "Feminists, Workers and Unions" is the best example, endorsing *inter alia*: "Women only" shop stewards' classes for AMWU women shop stewards, because it "enhances possibilities for the growth of solidarity among the women themselves"; "proportional representation for women on all appointed and elected bodies of trade unions"; and "positive discrimination in favour of women". Her basic proposals were at least tacitly accepted by every left-wing group present, excepting only the SL, and two key proposals, the organisation of women's groups or caucuses in the unions based on sex and preferential treatment for women workers, were explicitly advocated by the CL, SWL and SWAG as well as the CPA.

According to Beaver and others, behind the rationales of union bureaucrats for opposing these measures lies the male chauvinism of the almost entirely male trade-union bureaucracy. This is undoubtedly true, but also irrelevant. The question must be examined on its merits. Not only would these measures hinder the class struggle, but they would *directly interfere* with the immediate struggle against sexual discrimination, male chauvinist prejudice, and the domestic slavery of women in the family. The sexual divisions within the working class are consciously promoted by the bosses and supported precisely by the backwardness of male workers influenced by bourgeois ideology. It is the traditional *isolation* of working-class women from the struggles of the class that is one of the greatest bars to the class consciousness of both male and female workers. For women workers to

organise separately within the unions simply on the basis of their oppression as women would be suicidal. Male workers must be won to support the demands of women workers and to actively participate in their struggles; and a program to unite the whole working class against capitalism is necessary if any real gains for women are to be won. Union bureaucrats have always been of the opinion that women workers should organise only on "women's issues". Revolutionists must fight to make the special oppression of women the concern of the working class as a whole. Separate organisation of women workers is itself a capitulation to male workers' male chauvinism.

Preference for women, or as quaintly expressed by the CL "training and job opportunities weighted in working women's favour as an equalising factor" (Helen Anderson, "The Choice Before Us"), is an equally harmful proposal. In the context of growing unemployment, preferential hiring of women would mean sacking male workers. Discrimination against women in employment and advancement must be fought, not at the expense of male workers -- pitting one section of the class against the other in a futile struggle over a shrinking piece of the capitalist pie -- but at the expense of the bosses by demanding an immediate end to discriminatory practices of the bosses and the union bureaucracy, and a sliding scale of hours to end unemployment.

Thus for the women's movement to "orient toward" working women is far from sufficient to create a revolutionary movement for women's liberation, and can just as easily contribute to working-class defeat by promoting the false consciousness of feminism among women workers. However, one tendency, represented at the Conference by the CL and SWAG, sees a turn toward working women as a panacea. The left-social-democratic SWAG gave this workerism an explicitly reformist-feminist thrust. Janey Stone openly called for winning working women to feminism: "If women workers break through to women's liberation



Left -- Jenny Eastwood (SWL); Right -- Ros Harrison (CL): USec sisters back feminism.

ideas, they can play a central role in leading the fight for women's liberation -- and in leading the whole working class fight for socialism as well." But it takes little reflection to realise that among current "women's liberation ideas" is the idea of "sisterhood" with women of the ruling class. Stone's "strategy" for working women consists of pressuring the ALP and the union bureaucracy to take up the fight for women's demands.

The CL failed to fight feminist ideology for the simple reason that they fundamentally agree with it. Like their "sisters" in the SWL, the CL supports the "autonomous women's movement". Together with the SWL they advocated preferential advancement for women and exclusionist women's caucuses, saying "we must extend into the unions some of the methods of organisation that we have developed in the early stages of the women's movement", and "we recognise the need for women to organise on the basis of their specific oppression". Anderson's paper also refers to the current, middle-class feminist women's movement as a "working class organisation" -- a workerist variant of the SWL's "theory" of "objectively revolutionary" feminism. For the CL rank-and-file worker activism obviates the need for political struggle against reformist misleadership. According to Anderson, the feminist movement need only take "a much more active part in the class struggle than it has hitherto" in order to be "ideologically and organisationally". It is no accident that at the Conference, the CL tried hard not to offend anyone; CLer Ros Harrison apologised that the CL paper was "not particularly adequate". The CL's tailist refusal to struggle against false consciousness makes them, in spite of occasional "revolutionary" rhetoric, only a left prop for reformist and feminist betrayers.

Deliberate confusion has been fostered by the socialist-feminists on the relation of women's liberation to the class struggle. It was often alleged that to see women's oppression as "secondary" and class oppression as "primary" meant ignoring the special oppression of women. Women's liberation is subordinate to class struggle only as the part is subordinate to the whole. To the extent that formal sexual equality is achieved under capitalism, the need becomes clearer for a socialist revolution to achieve *real* equality, by reintegrating all women into social production and ending the role of the family as the economic unit of society by collectivising domestic tasks. And the working class can achieve revolutionary consciousness and unity only by resolutely fighting against women's oppression and overcoming the capitalist-inspired racial, sexual, ethnic or national divisions, rejecting all forms of chauvinism. It is for these reasons that the SL is committed to the mobilisation of working-class women not just on the basis of their specific oppression as women but in struggle for a program to achieve workers' power: for a non-exclusionist, international, communist working women's movement. ■

CONTINUED FROM PAGE ONE

## ... Leylands

factory running, also backed by some ALP Federal Caucus members, is nothing less than a call to unite the Australian working class with the "hated" multinationals against foreign workers. Particularly in an industry which employs a high percentage of migrant workers this ultimately racist argument can only promote divisions in the work force: the next step after protectionism is to turn on "foreign" workers in Australia. Such reactionary appeals must be fought with demands to oppose protectionism, to combat the special oppression of migrant workers (such as full citizenship rights for migrants), and to build a real international car workers' industrial organisation.

Rather than attack national chauvinism, the reformist Communist Party of Australia (CPA) gives "critical support" to protectionist tariffs and quotas. According to *Tribune* (22 October 1974), "The demand [for import quotas] can be supported as a temporary measure because no other steps are being immediately taken which could preserve jobs." But this is not preserving jobs; it is trading Japanese jobs and conditions for Australian. The CPA *accepts* the capitalists' alternative which says you must have one or the other, but the working class, an *international* class, *must not*. The inevitable increase in national chauvinism as economic competition between imperialist powers increases will transform economic protectionism into support for working-class fratricide in a new imperialist war. The CPA would like to absolve itself by deploring "the limitations and 'side effects' of import restrictions", and musing that "chauvinist and racist sentiments always act against the interests of the working class". These empty words cannot change the substance of their position; they only add to the open social-patriotism of the Wilsons and Thompsons the stench of hypocrisy.

The Healyite Socialist Labour League (SLL) has a record of condoning national chauvinist backwardness. (For example, *Workers News* (17 October 1974) had no critical comment when it reported in detail demands by Cockatoo dockyard workers for "Australian" warships to be built in Australia.) *Workers News* managed a perfunctory observance of the class line, mentioning that car import quotas should be "thrown out"; but workers will never learn why from the SLL, which completely failed to attack chauvinist ideology.

The demand to nationalise Leylands can easily mislead workers if it is confined to the government taking responsibility for capitalism's business failures. A government purchase of Leylands' plant may temporarily preserve jobs; but a policy of nationalising a handful of companies by government purchase -- such as that of the "left" wing of the Labour Party in Britain -- would leave completely untouched the whole system of anarchic, capitalist private property and profit which caused Leylands' closure in the first place. The capitalists have no "right" to demand ransom for their inability to manage society's productive forces for the good of so-

ciety. The reformist utopia of "buying out" the bourgeoisie is pushed by the CPA, which in its propaganda on Leylands has not once mentioned the question of compensation, and holds up as a model the proposals of left-Labourite Tony Wedgewood-Benn: "If the Labour Party in Britain can consider such a move, why cannot Labor here do so? For a government that expresses concern about control by the multinationals and deterioration of the urban environment due to excessive use of automobiles, nationalisation under workers' control must become a real consideration" (*Tribune* 25 June 1974). The CPA is interested only in a cosmetic job for their system.

Revolutionaries must link nationalisation to the need to expropriate the capitalist class as a whole. But the expropriation of single branches of industry or even single enterprises is a demand which can form a connection between this goal and the immediate problems of workers, "dictated by the fact that different branches of industry are on different levels of development, occupy a different place in society, and pass through different stages of the class struggle. Only a general revolutionary upsurge of the proletariat can place the complete expropriation of the bourgeoisie on the order of the day. The task of *transitional* demands is to *prepare* the proletariat to solve this problem" (Leon Trotsky, *The Transitional Program*) (emphasis added).

The SLL, which abstractly calls for "nationalisation of the entire car industry without compensation under workers control", abandons the transitional program by ultimately posing the expropriation of the capitalists as the sole possible immediate step against unemployment (or virtually anything), having dropped the Trotskyist demand for a sliding scale of hours and wages, and posing workers' control of industry only in relation to expropriation. The complement of this ultimatum is the SLL's economism in practice (such as during the recent Metal Trades campaign) which, coupled with their backhanded support to chauvinism, exposes their calls for expropriation as empty rhetorical bombast -- which can never build a revolutionary party but only a centrist trap. ■

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# As debate polarises National Women's Conference — "Socialist Feminist" illusion collapses

The 5-6 October National Women's Conference on Feminism and Socialism, intended to reconcile and unify the two, was almost from the start polarised over precisely the issues which counterpose socialist and feminist ideology: the class analysis of society and the nature and sources of women's oppression. The organisers of the Conference, especially the Communist Party of Australia (CPA), had hopes that it would result in greater integration of reformist varieties of socialism and the feminist ideology of the established women's movement. The Conference, held in Melbourne, attracted significant interest with 600 women attending, many from interstate.

Often considerable hostility from feminists met most speakers who discussed socialism and the working class. From the beginning, the greatest hostility was directed against members of the Spartacist League, the only tendency to attack the ideology of feminism openly as a fetter on women's liberation, and to call for the fight against women's specific oppression to become an integral part of the class struggle of the proletariat against capitalism. The feminists objected to "divisive" ideological or programmatic debate, and instead wanted the Conference to focus on personalist, subjectivist expressions of "sisterhood". They correctly saw that the Marxist analysis of women's oppression -- that it is not the central axis of society and not independent of capitalism, but rather a form of oppression derived from and a necessary part of class society -- is incompatible with their desire to unite all women as women across class lines. This quickly became the main line of political struggle.

## FRUSTRATED REVISIONISTS SLANDER SL

Because of this polarisation, the "socialist feminists" of the Socialist Workers League (SWL), CPA and Socialist Workers Action Group (SWAG) had little impact as the two counterposed ideologies they attempt to reconcile clashed. Frustrated, they have attempted to blame not the feminists who interjected, booed and sometimes tried to shout down speakers, but the SL which was guilty of fighting for its program. Nancy Stone (SWAG) wrote:

"The division in the conference was intensified by the extremely sectarian behaviour of the Spartacist League, who made no attempt to build the movement, but rather took the conference as an opportunity to present their politics as loudly, frequently and antagonistically as possible. Unfortunately, their intention of polarizing the meeting was quite successful and they can be blamed for alienating many women from socialist or even pro-working class concepts." (*Red Ink*, 9 October 1974)

For SWAG it is indeed "extremely sectarian" to argue for Marxism. But in addition, every political tendency represented saw the Conference as an opportunity to present their views, including (of course) SWAG. The Conference was not organised, advertised or prepared to "build" anything, but as a political forum. Of course, Stone omits to so much as mention what the views of the SL were, much less argue against them. It is this fear of political struggle which characterises the behaviour of SWAG, and carries with it a threat of political suppression: it is not the "behaviour" of the SL but its politics that she objects to. It was SWAG which for the same implicitly anti-communist reasons forced the political exclusion of the SL from the Melbourne Working Women's Group in April 1973 (see *ASP* no 6, March 1974).

In the same vein is the typically slanderous coverage of the Conference in the SWL's *Direct Action* (18 October 1974) which alleges that the SL "describe[s] the feminist movement as 'bourgeois' and 'reactionary'...". This is absolutely false. The SL argued that the ideology of feminism is a variety of bourgeois ideology which can only lead the movement to defeat. As a social

movement, women's liberation is largely petty-bourgeois in composition, and although it is dominated by this bourgeois ideology it contains many who can be won to a proletarian perspective. And the SWL knows full well that the SL fully supports the fight for women's equality even in bourgeois terms, just as Leninists have always supported other bourgeois-democratic reforms without in any way promoting illusions in bourgeois democracy. Naturally, the reformists of the SWL are incapable of seeing that distinction. Instead of fighting bourgeois ideology in the women's movement, they actively promote it, helping to keep the existing movement tied to the ruling class. The SL argued not to liquidate or ignore the struggle for women's liberation, but to make that a united proletarian struggle, part of a program for workers' revolution.

All of the "socialist" feminists supported the exclusion of males from attending the Conference. This policy is an essential component of feminism, which holds that working women have more in common with bourgeois women than even with those working-class men who support their struggles. The women's liberation movement should define itself on the basis of class politics and not sex.

One of the key tests of the class orientation of the tendencies at the Conference came in the debate at the first session over the need for an "autonomous" or independent women's movement. The CPA was for the most part indistinguishable from the feminists. CPAer Judy Munday in her paper for the Conference argued for unity of women across class lines because "all women by virtue of their sex are part of something with no marxist definition"! Mavis Robertson, who is on the CPA National Committee, provided more in the way of a pseudo-socialist cover, by calling for an "autonomous" movement defined as "self-concerned" and "self-managed", to form an "alliance" with the working class while remaining exclusively a women's movement. To propose that a movement uniting women of all classes ally with the working class in its life-and-death struggle against the ruling class is not so contradictory in practice as in theory; it is fully consistent with the CPA's reformist class-collaborationist treachery in all fields: politically binding the proletariat to its class enemy.

Contrary to the thesis of the reformists that "socialists are the most consistent feminists", feminists and "socialist" feminists at the Conference generally gave not only different but counterposed reasons for backing the idea of an independent, exclusionist women's movement. The most consistent feminists argued for this idea because they saw women's oppression as primary

(whether in theory as the result of a "patriarchal", "male" social system as did radical feminist Chris Sitka, or subjectively as their own felt oppression as women) or because at any rate they saw women's oppression as coexisting with class oppression but having no essential connection with it.

All the "socialist" feminists have evolved similar rationales for supporting the "autonomy" of the women's movement; ironically, they all rest on some form of the false idea that the movement has an automatically or inherently revolutionary character -- for example, the SWL's theory of "objectively anti-capitalist" bourgeois-democratic reforms, or the CPA's conception of a coalition of special-interest groups for "fundamental social change". In simple terms, this amounts to saying that the reform struggle is in itself revolutionary. At the same time, echoing the feminists, SWAG, SWL and the CPA all warned that women need to organise separately in order to ensure that the future socialist society would not continue women's oppression. SWL member and supposed Trotskyist Nita Kieg derived the need for an independent women's movement from the degeneration of the Russian Revolution! But a socialist revolution will not be successful without a struggle against that oppression. Having abandoned a revolutionary perspective, they have lost sight of what a revolution would mean in transforming consciousness, and regard the backwardness of the working class as it is today as a fixed quantity. In fact, to insist that women organise separately to fight their oppression in the face of male chauvinism within the working class is to abandon the struggle against this false consciousness, helping to perpetuate it.

Keig went so far as to claim that Lenin and the Third International endorsed the conception of an "independent women's movement". This is pure fabrication. While the Comintern decided on the necessity for Communist parties to create special forms for work among women (see the Theses of the Third Congress of the Comintern; reprinted in *Bolshevism and the Women's Movement*, published by the SL), it was completely opposed to feminism. Clara Zetkin, one of the founding leaders of the Comintern, had no doubt what policy she, together with the Bolsheviks, was advocating:

"What we usually designate as the communist women's movement is no independent women's movement and has nothing to do with any feminist tendency whatsoever." (Protocol of the Fourth Congress of the Communist International, p 725; quoted in *Women and Revolution* no 6, summer 1974)

Continued on page three



## Defeat Walker frame-up!

Demonstrate:

5 December  
Qld Govt Tourist Bureau  
149 King Street, Sydney

18 December  
Redfern Court,  
Redfern Street, Redfern

The Bjelke-Petersen gang of reactionaries is currently carrying out a campaign of repression of Aboriginals and leftists in Queensland. Among the victims have been members of the Self-Management Group, Communist League and well-known black militant Denis Walker. The Spartacist League (SL) calls for unconditional defence of these groups and individuals. In Sydney, a united front has been initiated to defend Denis Walker against extradition to Queensland where he is being framed up on charges of "attempting to obtain money with menace". If the extradition is successful, he will likely be imprisoned for several years. In a related case, Lionel Lacey and John Garcia have been charged with conspiracy. These allegations arise out of a meeting which was secretly taped by police in which Walker allegedly threatened University of Queensland Union president Jim Varghese while negotiating for a grant of money for a school on Palm Island. The defence effort is being co-ordinated by the Queensland Act Confrontation Committee (QACC), reconstituted on the initiative of the SL on the basis of the demands "Free Denis Walker, Lionel Lacey and John Garcia", "Drop the charges", "No extradition", "Repeal the Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Act" and "Stop the repression in Queensland".

An SL-initiated picket line at Redfern

Court on 9 October demanded that the extradition be halted. The largest contingent was that of the SL. Several members of the Socialist Workers League (SWL), members of AICD, and individual militants also attended. A lone member of the CL turned up (two hours late), but the CPA did not participate at all. In addition to the slogans that QACC has adopted, the SL carried signs reading "For multi-racial working-class action against Queensland repression!", "Not black separatism, but a multi-racial vanguard party! For a united workers' revolution!". At the hearing, Walker's case was postponed until 18 December in order to allow Varghese, currently overseas, to appear as a witness in Walker's defence.

Meetings to publicise the case at the University of Sydney, University of NSW and Macquarie University drew 70, 35 and 50 people respectively. Walker, the main speaker, concentrated on the facts of the case and the general plight of blacks. While sharply criticising the Labor government's attitude toward blacks, he proposed no strategy against racial oppression but only specific actions.

At Sydney University, Walker opposed the ideas of self-determination and black separatism but had no clear programmatic alternative. Neither the SWL or the CL (both part of the QACC), who uncritically endorse self-determination for Australian blacks -- a dead end in the absence of a material basis for a black nation -- bothered to criticise Walker or for that matter to put any political position. In contrast, the SL has consistently denounced unviable separatist and nationalist solutions to black oppression, and called for a racially united struggle against it.



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