



Fairfax, Newport, petrol — bureaucrats in retreat

Union rights under attack

**Smash the anti-union legislation!
For state-wide general strikes in Vic, Qld and WA!**

Malcolm Fraser came to power with a pledge to slash social services, drive down wages and working conditions and whip recalcitrant unions into line -- more reliably than an ALP government could. Medibank has been dismantled; two "plateau" indexation decisions have markedly reduced real wages; increased unemployment has been accepted and encouraged to make Australian secondary industry more competitive through domestic cost-cutting. The labour bureaucracy's treachery last November and its continuing fear of mobilising the ranks in struggle has already taken a substantial toll on workers' standards of living.

Now, one year after taking office Fraser has moved to carry out his pledge in full. The week following Remembrance Day saw a multi-pronged offensive aimed at crippling the trade union movement, encouraged and initiated by the Fraser Government. With the national wage indexation case pending before the Arbitration Commission, three work actions which had little intrinsic connection -- a strike at the Fairfax press in Sydney, a nation-wide ban on repairs at oil refineries and a longstanding ban against construction of the proposed Newport power station in Melbourne -- became three fronts in a showdown provoked by the Federal Government. Within a matter of days every L/NCP state government introduced wide-ranging anti-union legislation. The bourgeois press orchestrated a virulent anti-union hysteria, including the following editorial statement by the scab *Sydney Morning Herald* (13 November):

"Sooner or later the Government is going to have to meet the challenge -- a challenge to the rule of law no less than to its own authority, a challenge to the general community interest by one vested sectional interest. If meeting the challenge means a collision of national scope, then so be it."

On 11 November Fraser ordered the Postal Commission to use penal provisions against Australian Postal and Telecommunications Union (APTU)

members who were black banning Fairfax mail in sympathy with the striking unions. Seventeen postal workers were suspended in four days. The threat of a national postal strike against the government's provocations was posed. Instead the APTU leadership drew back, setting the tone for a week of retreats and ever sharper blows and provocations by the bosses:

- Monday (15 November): APTU votes to lift the ban on Fairfax
- Wednesday: oil refinery workers forced to lift their ban
- Wednesday: Victoria Premier Rupert Hamer introduces legislation aimed at smashing the Newport ban
- Friday: Fraser presents an ultimatum to Newcastle dockyard unions -- accept a no-strike pledge, wage freeze and financial liability for construction delays or no more work.

The APTU vote was pivotal. The bourgeoisie correctly took it as a sign that the bureaucracy was not willing to mobilise the ranks for a fight -- a fight which it would in all likelihood have won. In endorsing the lifting of the ban, the reformist Communist Party of Australia and Socialist Workers Party demonstrated once again that they would be just as treacherous at the head of the working class as the existing leadership. For the bourgeoisie, it was "Sanity at last" (*The Australian*, 16 November).

What was termed a "tactical retreat" was in fact a signal for a generalised rout. The criminal class collaborationism of the labour bureaucracy was epitomised by the presence of the APTU federal secretary, George Slater, on the Postal Commission. Strike breakers cannot be condoned within the ranks of the union movement -- if Slater does not resign from the Commission immediately he must be expelled from the APTU.

Hamer's Vital States Projects Bill would completely outlaw bans on "non-industrial grounds", allowing for fines of up to \$10,000 for individ-



"Neville Wran (right) is a better Liberal Premier than Dick Hamer (left)."

uals and \$50,000 for organisations. Legal bans could only be instituted following compulsory government-conducted secret ballots with \$50 fines for unionists who fail to vote. A bill tabled in the Queensland Parliament also provides for secret ballots (in strikes lasting more than a week), strips unions of immunity from civil damages and provides for temporary suspensions and automatic deregistration (after three suspensions in as many years) by the Industrial Commission. It would also enable employers to automatically stand down workers left idle by strikes. In Western Australia, proposed "right-to-work" provisions would provide automatic exemption from union membership to all who requested it.

The three bills come after months of clamouring in the national press over bans and political strikes and "undemocratic" actions by "left-wing minorities" in the union movement. For months Fraser has sought to broaden the Newport dispute into a generalised power struggle of government versus unions. These bills pose the most direct and immediate threat to the labour movement nationally. They must be smashed by immediate state-wide general strikes in all three states. Given the extent of Fraser's involvement, a general strike in any of the states would quite likely lead to open federal intervention, necessitating a defensive national general strike.

The current offensive is part of the Australian bourgeoisie's urgent need to drive down labour costs. Overseas capital is loath to invest because of the relatively high wages, and the low rate of productivity in Australia's secondary industry has put it increasingly under threat from foreign imports. The Fraser Government has rejected the stiffer tariff barriers desired by sections of secondary industry and the union bureaucracy. The world upturn of 1975-76, having passed Australia by, appears headed into a new downside. The government is rumoured to be considering devaluation, which would lower the cost of exports on the world market at the expense of the domestic standard of living. In any case, Fraser's monetarist economic policy (tight money supply and credit, heavy pruning of government expenditure) has had the effect of further depressing the economy -- pushing unemployment toward 400,000 -- with only marginal impact on an inflation rate which still exceeds 10 per cent. The "full" 2.2 per cent wage rise granted 22 November, blasted by Fraser as an inflationary spur to further unemployment, in fact retained the losses incurred by the previous "plateau" decisions and was simply a sop intended to avert

Continued on page three



Striking printers march to Fairfax Building; the strike cannot be won without mass militant picketing to shut Fairfax down.

**Power struggle
in China**

SEE PAGE 4

SWP lifts ban against SL

As shown by the correspondence reprinted on this page the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) has lifted its almost *two and a half year* ban on members of the Spartacist League (SL) attending its *Direct Action* forums. The ban was instituted on 23 April 1974, as a national policy against all SL members, on the fabricated grounds that the SL "disrupted" the forums. The real reason, as admitted by SWP Melbourne organiser Steve Painter, was that the SL's attendance was turning the forums into too much of a political debate -- something they were not intended to be. (For a full documented report of the SWP's charges and our exclusion see *ASP* no 9, June 1974.)

That the charges of disruption were a smoke-screen for what was in fact a political exclusion was confirmed by numerous incidents over the period of the ban. Not only SL members but SL sympathisers and even SL contacts were excluded; the Bolshevik Tendency after its expulsion from the Communist Party in July 1975 was excluded in Melbourne because *their politics* were "the same as Spartacists"; in fact anyone seen talking to, or associated with the SL, and whether or not they had ever attended *Direct Action* forums previously, were likely to be, and usually were, excluded. The charges of disruption are even more farcical in view of the SWP's consistent practice of allowing all SL members into its other public forums -- where the SWP's exclusionism might unduly embarrass it in front of the broader left-liberal audience it pursues.

Both the SWP's past practice and the conditions of their "welcome back" raise the question of what workers' democracy actually means in relation to public meetings. Clearly an organisation which holds a public meeting does so in order to put forward its own political viewpoint with not only the right but the obligation to run the meeting and establish rules of procedure. But there are democratic and undemocratic rules of procedure. What then can be said of the example of the SWP which at various times has allowed only 30 seconds time for questions, repeatedly interrupted and cut off Spartacist speakers to then threaten their removal if they interject while any SWPer is speaking, and refused to call on Spartacists even when no other hand in the meeting was raised? The SWP's "right" to be petty and bureaucratic is of course their *formal* bourgeois-democratic right but it is totally unrelated, in fact counterposed, to the actual content of workers' democracy. With due consideration to time and other practical matters the working class has the right to demand of any political tendency that its discussion period allow for a free and open exchange between conflicting political views. Furthermore, the SWP's suppression of political opposition can only validate the self-interested bureaucratism of the trade-union misleadership.

For Marxists workers' democracy is a class question; it delineates the class boundaries and postulates the optimum conditions for the political struggle and clarification necessary for the working class to decide its objective class interests and the best way forward. But the SWP sees no qualitative distinction between bourgeois democracy and workers' democracy. In fact their conception of their "rights" in running their public meetings flows from equating the two: workers' democracy becomes merely the application of bourgeois-democratic rights to the labour movement. Thus the rights which the SWP establishes for itself dovetail with bourgeois legality; at *their* meetings they claim the right

to bureaucratic suppression -- on the basis of *their* property rights! Accordingly the SWP supports the SLL's "right" to exclude anyone from its stage-produced "public" events.

Such a methodology has a political logic. If it is accepted that an organisation can exclude or suppress certain political views in its "public" activity -- in effect categorising them as not a legitimate part of the workers movement -- then there is no difference *in principle* from extending that to their suppression by the use of thug attacks or the bourgeois state. Moreover the SWP has already availed itself of a "theory" to justify such possibilities. In an article that followed a series of Maoist goon attacks against SWP/SYA members, Dave Holmes quoted American SWPer Barry Shepherd:

"Such attacks are a violation of workers democracy, a violation of democratic rights in general.... In this case, the demand that the state authorities defend the democratic rights of the victims is not at all the same thing as calling upon those authorities to settle political differences[!].... Insofar as a tendency in the working class utilised such methods, it has forfeited any right to appeal to working-class solidarity to defend such attacks." (*Direct Action*, 24 April 1975)

The incorporation of workers' democracy into "democratic rights in general" neatly obliterates the class line that divides them; thug attacks

Exchange of correspondence between the Socialist Workers Party and Spartacist League

19 October 1976

Spartacist League,
Sydney

Dear comrades,

Some time ago we excluded members of the Spartacist League from attending our *Direct Action* forums on the grounds of the behaviour of your members at our forums. Since that time we have noted the attendance of Spartacists at our public meetings and their behaviour at them.

In view of the fact that your members at our public meetings conducted themselves in general in an orderly manner, we feel that we should **once** again welcome you to our forums in the hope that your behaviour at them will now remain within the bounds of how we decide to organise and conduct these events.

On this last point we want to stress a number of things, which you have disputed with us in the past, because we have by no means gone back on them.

Our forums are organised by us along the lines we see fit. We make the rules the chair must follow. We leave it to the discretion of the chair to conduct the meetings in a way that will be most interesting and enlightening to all those in attendance. That includes who and in what order to call for questions and how long or short the questions should be. Attendance at our forums gives you no rights other than to listen to the speaker in perfect quiet and *if* called upon by the chair to ask a question, to do so in the time allowed by the chair. It is then the right of the speakers to answer or not, as they see fit.

Another important point that we must stress is the duration of these functions. They do not finish when the chair ends the formal discussion period. They continue while anyone is still on our headquarters, informally talking or drinking coffee afterwards. So this means that it is impermissible to engage in wild abuse or shouting matches with either the chair or anyone else. In our opinion such behaviour can only be designed to intimidate and drive off any people who are new to left-wing functions and therefore will be seen as an attack on *our* rights to talk to them. Moreover, if people want to talk with Spartacists they will, but it is not your right to have them do so. If they indicate they don't want to, abusive, insulting persistence will be seen as an attack on their rights to enjoy the function and discuss with who they want.

Finally when we decide that people should leave our premises because we wish to wind-up the function they must do so right away. Who stays around for discussions or further internal meetings that might be on is up to us to decide. If we wish to invite some individuals who are not yet members of ours to stay longer for *any* reason, that is our right.

Your attendance at our forums in future will be taken as acceptance and understanding of these conditions. If we feel then that you are still

become the criteria for exclusion from the workers movement and lo and behold the SWP has a "principled" basis for calling the capitalists' courts and cops into the labour movement. In fact this mealy-mouthed "theory" is a cover for the SWP to cross the class line in pursuit of its short-term appetites. Thus in 1974 in order to keep close to the Pringle-Owens leadership of the NSW Builders Labourers it supported their use of the courts against Maoist Norm Gallagher's federal takeover bid by claiming that Gallagher and his officials "deserve to be treated like bosses' agents" (*Direct Action*, 13 December 1974). The absurdity of this position, in which individuals or tendencies can be classified at whim as in or out of the workers movement, is that it could exclude the overwhelming majority of the trade-union bureaucracy who as a matter of course act "like bosses' agents" and use bureaucratic suppression against their rivals or leftist critics.

At root the SWP's justification for crossing the class line is based on a Kautskyan conception that socialism means simply "expanding" bourgeois democracy "qualitatively, that is, extending it into the economic structure" (Joseph Hansen, "Is democracy worth fighting for?", *Direct Action*, 21 August 1975). But socialist democracy is *counterposed* to bourgeois democracy, separated by proletarian revolution and suppression of the "democracy" of the exploiters. "Pure democracy" as Lenin noted "is the mendacious phrase of a liberal who wants to fool the workers".

disputing them in practice, we of course reserve our right to exclude you once again.

Fraternally,

Jim Percy
National Secretary
Socialist Workers Party.

26 November 1976

Dear Comrades,

We note receipt of your letter of 19 October 1976 in which you seek to justify the exclusion of members of the Spartacist League from your *Direct Action* forums from 23 April 1974 to the present, to "welcome" us to your forums in the meantime, and to lay some fake basis for a renewed unprincipled exclusion of us at some future time.

When it suited you to put your meetings into quarantine you manufactured charges of "deliberate and repeated disruption" against us. Now that it suits you to "welcome" us back you find our members have recently "conducted themselves in general in an orderly manner". And for the future -- doubtless you will continue to see whatever "behaviour" you want.

Even the normal rules of meeting procedure may in bureaucratic hands be used to suppress important discussion. However, you have devised against us a restrictive code of etiquette not merely completely beyond the needs of keeping order at a meeting public to the working class, but also quite clearly specifically designed to allow you both to manage discussion in a manner inimical to workers' democracy and to suppress all dissent from your bureaucratic procedures.

Your implication that Spartacists "engage in wild abuse or shouting matches", that they attempt to drive newcomers away from your forums and that their behaviour is "abusive" and "insulting" is dishonest. But clearly our perceptions of political "behaviour" flow from vastly different standpoints. Your opinion as to what constitutes "intimidation" makes it clear that you fear your membership and periphery will be intimidated by our raising disagreements with the non-Trotskyist politics of your organisation. Our attitude to your forums is that they are *political gatherings*; people interested in political discussion will not demand "perfect quiet", and will not assert a "right" to refuse to call on an opponent tendency during the discussion period, or to fail to answer its points.

We protest against your rules in the strongest possible terms as an attack on workers' democracy. But we do not turn down opportunities in the left and workers movement to argue our politics. We will at times avail ourselves of your invitation, accepting its conditions under protest. We shall act as we have in the past, obeying legitimate instructions of the chair and respecting the rights of the meeting. Our behaviour has always been orderly at your public meetings and will continue to be so.

Fraternally,

Bill Logan
Spartacist League

Australasian SPARTACIST

a monthly organ of revolutionary Marxism for the rebirth of the Fourth International published by Spartacist Publications for the Central Committee of the Spartacist League of Australia and New Zealand, section of the international Spartacist tendency

EDITORIAL BOARD: Adaire Hannah
Steve Haran
Bill Logan
Len Meyers
Dave Reynolds

(Melbourne correspondent: John Sheridan)

GPO Box 3473,
Sydney,
NSW, 2001.

(02) 660-7647

GPO Box 2339,
Melbourne,
Victoria, 3001.

(03) 429-1597

SUBSCRIPTIONS: Two dollars for the next twelve issues (one year).

AUSTRALASIAN SPARTACIST is registered at the GPO, Sydney for posting as a newspaper -- Category C.

Union rights . . .

Continued from page one

serious wage struggles and to preserve the Arbitration Commission's tenuous hold over wage fixation. The bourgeoisie offers the workers a choice of sacrifices to save the faltering capitalist economy: either higher unemployment or lower wages (and higher prices). The working class must put forward its own alternative: a struggle to expropriate the bankrupt capitalist class and institute a planned economy under a workers government.

The prospect for the coming year is one of running class battles. The bureaucracy's vacillations and betrayals in the three struggles which came to a head in November demonstrate once again the incapacity of a reformist perspective to defend the living standards and even the basic union rights of the working class. The tendency toward an ever greater bourgeois state stranglehold over the unions can only be reversed by a union leadership committed to the destruction of that state. The pro-capitalist misleaders must be thrust aside through the construction of alternative leadership groupings in the unions based on a genuine and comprehensive class-struggle program.

Victory to Fairfax strike!

SYDNEY -- In calling on the APTU on November 14 to lift its ban on Fairfax mail, doubtless after considerable behind-the-scenes arm-twisting by the ACTU and APTU bureaucrats, the Combined Unions Committee (CUC) at Fairfax claimed they wanted to prevent a general mail strike which would alienate public opinion and take the pressure off Fairfax. What they succeeded in doing, however, was further isolating and weakening the already beleaguered strike.

The strikers have been fighting for a joint log of claims which includes four demands: a 35-hour week, \$20 wage increase, payment of the Medibank levy and a guarantee against any redundancies resulting from the introduction of new photocomposition equipment, which by the company's estimate will involve the scrapping of 300 jobs. The company has refused to even negotiate on the first three demands, settling in for a long and bitter strike. On 26 November Fairfax applied to the State Industrial Commission for the deregistration of the Printing and Kindred Industries Union (PKIU), which represents 1100 of the 1400 strikers. Using staff labour as scabs, it has maintained publication of its newspapers (which include the *Sydney Morning Herald*, *Sun*, *Financial Review* and *National Times*) since the strike first began 21 October. Despite the union's call for a consumer boycott of scab newspapers, the refusal of Transport Workers Union truck drivers to cross the picket lines and a continuing ban by wharfies on Fairfax newsprint, Fairfax is claiming that its circulation is back to pre-strike levels and advertising revenue has not been diminished considerably.

Not only is the APTU now handling scab mail, but members of the Australian Journalists Association and the Federated Clerks Union have continued to work from the first day of the strike, directly aiding the employer's strikebreaking efforts. In fact the AJA has lined up with the company against the striking members of the PKIU by offering to have their members work the new equipment.

While the Murdoch press has maintained a virtual blackout on the strike, Fairfax has used its newspapers as a forum for virulent anti-strike propaganda. The *Sydney Morning Herald* (15, 16 November) has proudly displayed the disputed new photocomposition equipment, boasting in a scarcely veiled threat to the striking printers that it is already being used by staff labour trained before the strike to bring out the scab papers. To clinch the point, the *Herald* reminded the Fairfax strikers of experiences in the US "where the employers and the union met head-on, and the union emerged from the confrontation with its back permanently broken", citing not only the nine-months debacle which destroyed the pressmen's union at the *Washington Post* last year but also an earlier strike at a smaller newspaper where "less than 10 of the 180 men who walked out were allowed to return".

The Fairfax strikers have maintained a high degree of militancy. Numerous strikers have been arrested by the army of police stationed at the Fairfax Building to protect scabs. But it is not surprising that a certain amount of demoralisation is setting in. Particularly with the lifting of the postal ban, the original hope fostered by the strike leadership of starving the company out is no longer very convincing. Though pickets have been set up from the beginning of the strike, numbering as many as 500 at times, the CUC has never attempted to prevent scabs from entering the building nor seriously tried to stop trucks picking up papers from entering or leaving the depot. Instead the picketers have been

Continued on page seven

SLL covers for chauvinist protectionism

Shipyard jobs on the brink

On 19 November, three months after first announcing plans to phase out the shipbuilding and repair industries, thereby eliminating thousands of jobs, Fraser made his final "compromise" offer to the shipworkers: in return for two ship orders and 1500 jobs at Newcastle State dockyard, a firm union guarantee of no strikes, no demands for improved working conditions or wage increases outside indexation, acceptance of any retrenchments resulting from "productivity" speed-ups, and an unprecedented clause holding the unions financially responsible for any delays in final delivery. Three days later the Newcastle dockyard workers rejected this insult as "totally unacceptable". They must now mobilise for occupations of all building and repair facilities to be backed up by widespread sympathy action from the rest of the labour movement.

It is the pusillanimous union bureaucrats who invited Fraser's scorn to be heaped on the shipworkers. Despite some initial bluster these abject labour traitors have abjured struggle to plead for higher subsidies to the shipbuilding magnates and stiffer tariff protection against Japanese shipyards. ACTU President Hawke let it be known to his mates in Canberra that what he is "concerned about is trying to keep a viable industry", even if that "may cause some redundancies" (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 9 September)!

With new ship orders becoming scarce worldwide, 20,000 of Japan's 343,000 shipworkers have already lost their jobs and the Japanese Minister of Transport has threatened to slash shipyard capacity by 35 per cent next financial year (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 15 September). The Australian unions have not even tried to link up with these Japanese workers in a common struggle for international wage parity at the highest level and a shorter work week at no loss in pay. Such action would immeasurably strengthen the bonds of international proletarian solidarity and thereby serve notice that the workers were not about to be led into another inter-imperialist slaughter to divide up shrinking markets.

Instead the pro-capitalist misleaders encourage the Australian shipworkers, desperately trying to save their livelihoods, to channel their rage into chauvinist attacks on Japanese co-workers. Numerous Japanese ships docked here in recent months have been occupied by misled Australian workers with the message: Australian jobs before Japanese. One ship was prevented from leaving Newcastle harbour for four days by workers demanding that the giant Mitsubishi monopoly turn down an Australian order. On another occasion 200 workers from Garden Island and Cockatoo Island dockyards in Sydney occupied the Kaneshizu Maru to demonstrate for all ships servicing Australia to be built and repaired here.

In the "Manifesto of the Fourth International on the Imperialist War and the Proletarian Revolution" Trotsky warned the proletariat against the "monstrous intensification of chauvinism" which accompanied trade wars. Yet the ostensibly Trotskyist Socialist Labour League (SLL), whose supporter Billy Haggerty is AMWU convenor at Cockatoo Island, has produced not a single word of criticism of the chauvinist hysteria in some seventeen articles dealing with the shipyards crisis. The SLL's paper *Workers News* has been noticeably reluctant to report on Haggerty's role in the Cockatoo Island demonstration, noting only that at a union meeting he successfully introduced a resolution calling for a vague "campaign of industrial action against the policies of the Fraser government" (*Workers News*, 16 September). Simply opposing Fraser in this context is back-handed support to protectionism. A delegation of workers from Garden Island lobbying in Canberra also opposed Fraser -- because he "sells us out to Japan monopolies" (*AMWU Monthly Journal*, October). In fact the only criticism *Workers News* (14 October) makes of the chauvinist actions is that they are futile "protests".

With their refusal to confront the protectionist fervour the SLL's calls to nationalise the shipbuilding industry and for a Labor government pledged to the nationalisation of all basic industry amount to nothing but "militant" social-chauvinism. The Healyite SLL loudly demands, "NOT A MAN DOWN THE ROAD" but in uncritically quoting deputy president of the Newcastle dockyards' works committee Mike Pinniger's statement that "the work should stay in this country in-



Anti-Japanese protest: where was SLL's Billy Haggerty?

stead of going to Japanese workers" (*Workers News*, 14 October) they make it clear that their concern is reserved for Australian workers. The class-collaborationist logic of protectionism is epitomised by the so-called Citizens Dockyard Committee which the Newcastle bureaucrats organised along with "representatives from industry" to argue for saving the dockyard in order to maintain Australia's "manufacturing independence" (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 9 September).

While calling for the expropriation of the shipbuilders and privately-owned shipyards the Spartacist League has also raised the need for the industry to be either modernised -- without speed-up, redundancies or wage cuts -- or converted to some other socially useful production with employer-paid retraining (see *ASP* no 35, September 1976). The aim of the working class is not to prop up dying industries for national considerations but to strive towards an international division of labour which can only come about through the overthrow of capitalism worldwide. In adapting to the Australian workers' chauvinist prejudices the Healyites reject the struggle for international socialist revolution to more effectively tail the "left" labour bureaucrats, whose national parochialism is an inherent part of their reformist outlook.

Internationalism is dumped along with the entire Transitional Program in the rubbish bin of Healyite "dialectics" with the justification that under the impact of "The Crisis" simple trade-union demands become revolutionary. But it is on the basis of the Trotskyist Transitional Program, carried uniquely by the Spartacist tendency, that the working class will be organised to smash international capitalism and construct a rational world order. ■

For a workers' commission

The petition campaign conducted by the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) and the Spartacist League (SL) against the gangsterism of the Socialist Labour League (SLL) has amassed a wide range of endorsers in the labour and radical movements. The SLL has pathetically attempted to counter the impact of this campaign with a series of slanders and innuendos against the SWP, SL and other signatories. In addition a recent issue of *Workers News* (18 November) claimed that Bill Hartley, prominent member of the ALP Socialist Left, had retracted his endorsement because he received information denying the factual accuracy of the SWP's account of the violent attack perpetrated outside Sydney Trades Hall 17 October.

We do not know if the SLL reports Hartley fairly, nor, if they do, what his sources might be. However, we invite comrade Hartley to undertake a serious and proper investigation of his doubts by participating in a workers' commission of inquiry into the charges. We have nothing to hide. We challenge the SLL to propose other participants for such a commission. George Petersen, Labor member of the NSW Legislative Assembly, Ted Wheelwright, associate professor of economics at Sydney University, and Lester Bostock, administrator of the Black Theatre in Sydney have already expressed their willingness to serve on a commission. This list is a basis for discussion on the constitution of an authoritative commission. Comrade Hartley would be an authoritative addition.

Yesterday's "radicals", today's "capitalist roaders"

China shaken by turbulent power struggle

Ever since Mao's death in September the bourgeois analysts have paid close attention to events in China, fearful of any shake-up which would alter the openly pro-imperialist course navigated by the Great Helmsman. But the scope and suddenness of the shake-up that hit the front pages scarcely one month later caught even close observers of the topsy-turvy world of the Forbidden Palace off guard: Mao's wife Chiang Ching, "radical" scourge of the recently purged "capitalist-roader" Teng Hsiao-ping, had now been purged herself, swept up in a turbulent storm of bureaucratic struggle.

As the ensconced bureaucrats leaked rumour after reliable rumour to bourgeois diplomats and journalists, reactionary "friends" of China like the Murdoch press tried to piece together the "new Chinese puzzle", hopeful that it would not hinder China's "developing ties with the West" (*The Australian*, 13 October). Meanwhile, Peking's Australian mouthpiece, the Communist Party of Australia (Marxist-Leninist) (CPA(M-L)), cautiously refrained (for two weeks!) from drawing any precipitous conclusions until the dust settled and the new victors were confirmed, merely denouncing the "traitor press" for its "lies, speculation and slanders" (*Vanguard*, 21 October) and diplomatically affirming "that it will continue to enjoy close and warm fraternal relations with the great Communist Party of China" (*Vanguard*, 28 October).

The "lies" and "speculations" were rapidly confirmed. As the rumours of arrests began circulating through Peking on 12 October, "big character" wall posters were slapped up proclaiming Hua Kuo-feng as the new Chairman. New posters appeared denouncing an anonymous "gang of four" who "tamper with Chairman Mao's directives", as Hua was formally named Chairman and entrusted with "editing" (that is, falsifying and fabricating) Mao's writings. Within days, demonstrations were organised in Shanghai, the former power base of the purged "radicals", which named the "four dogs" and demanded their "liquidation".

The charges against Chiang Ching rapidly escalated in seriousness. Initially she was accused of inventing Mao's supposed parting quote: "Act according to the principles laid down" to further factional and personal power ambitions. To this was added the somewhat comic accusation that she had hastened her great husband's death by nagging him so much, and then, that she had deliberately prevented the deathly ill Mao from receiving



Banner carried in demonstration after Hua's purge of the "gang of four" depicts Chiang clique being punished for "crimes" against Mao.

proper medical treatment. Ironically Chiang has now been stuck with the label of the wicked "empress dowager", first hurled at her by the Pro-Teng demonstrators in Tien An Men Square last April.

Finally, on 22 October Peking officially announced the purge, denouncing the Chiang clique as "capitalist roaders" and vowing "to crush the counterrevolutionary conspiratorial clique". Arrested along with Mao's wife was virtually the entire leadership associated with the Cultural Revolution period, including: senior deputy premier Chang Chun-chiao; Wang Hung-wen, who rose from total obscurity to become the youngest member of the political bureau during the Cultural Revolution (he is now 40); and Yao Wen-yuan, an initiator of the Cultural Revolution and until his downfall the regime's chief propagandist. The latest charge laid at the feet of the new "capitalist roaders" is that they had allegedly plotted an armed coup by 30,000 Shanghai militia-men.

Amidst ad nauseum repetitions of Mao's "three dos and three don'ts" ("Practice Marxism, and not revisionism; unite, and don't split; be open and aboveboard, and don't intrigue and conspire"), the new "editor" of Mao's writings revealed a hitherto undisclosed alleged note from Mao to Hua which contradicted Mao's last testament according to Chiang. According to Hua, Mao wrote to him, "With you in charge, I am at ease" (*Peking Review*, 29 October). A virtual unknown a year ago, Hua now heads the party, government and army.

Despite Hua's unprecedented accumulation of posts, no single bureaucratic aspirant can today make an uncontested claim to correctly interpreting Mao's enigmatic quotations. There is no longer a single Bonapartist figure with enough authority to balance among the cliques and power blocs while keeping a lid on the intra-bureaucratic conflict which has boiled over periodically and now threatens to erupt with unprecedented force.

The fiction of "radicals" vs "moderates"

The Western bourgeois press explains Chinese politics in terms of "radicals" (including Mao himself, Chiang Ching, Wang Hung-wen) versus the "moderates" (Chou En-lai, Teng Hsiao-ping and now Hua Kuo-feng). However, the press cannot seem to figure out what concrete political differences separate the "radicals" from the "moderates". The *Wall Street Journal* (13 October), for instance, writes that the purge of "China's leftist leaders ... may lead to closer ties with the West". In a diametrically opposed interpret-

ation, the London *Times* (17 October) speculates: "There will probably be more Chinese rhetoric against 'imperialism', slightly less hostility to the Soviet Union...." The difficulty in figuring out exactly what the "radicals" and "moderates" are fighting about arises from the fact that there are no fundamental differences.

But there is a history of conflict. To understand the purge of Chiang Ching and the "Shanghai circle", it is necessary to go back almost two decades to the "Great Leap Forward". By pushing this adventurist policy in the late 1950s, Mao brought China to the brink of starvation and an economic collapse unprecedented in the history of the Sino-Soviet states. As a result, Mao lost much of his authority within the bureaucracy and was pushed into the background by a group led by Liu Shao-chi and Teng Hsiao-ping. The Liu/Teng group in turn adopted a Bukharinite economic policy making concessions to private peasant interests and expanding industry at a snail's pace.

Mao attempted to regain his authority and purge his conservative bureaucratic opponents by allying with Marshal Lin Piao's army and mobilising students and peasant youth (the Red Guards) on the basis of egalitarian anti-bureaucratic demagoguery. This was the "Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution". Had it succeeded, Mao would no doubt have launched another forced-march economic campaign similar to the Great Leap Forward.

However, the threatened officials were able to mobilise their own forces, often factory workers (as in the case of the 1966 Shanghai strikes), to counter the Red Guards. It is from this period that the general impression of an opposition between "radical" mass mobilisation/mystification policies and a "moderate" modern technology/material incentives orientation stems. While differences existed, they basically reflected different clienteles (Mao's peasant/army backing, Liu's association with industry and the state bureaucracy) and were not qualitative from the point of view of proletarian class interests.

But although this struggle reflected itself in policy differences, there were no stable factional programs. Chou's "program" was to come out on the winning side in every fight, and after 1967 Mao maintained his leading role only by shamelessly manoeuvring between the various power blocs. In the early 1970s most of the former "capitalist roaders" purged during the Cultural Revolution were reinstated, while Mao's prominent allies (such as Lin Piao and Chen Po-ta) were purged.

Class Series

REVOLUTIONARY MARXISM TODAY

Classes will be held on Wednesdays starting 8 December at 7.30pm.
Information and readings will be available at classes, or telephone: 660 7647.

Sydney

Class Series

THE DEVELOPMENT OF TROTSKYISM

Time: Tuesday nights weekly, 7.30pm
Topic: 'Cuba and Castroism'
For more information telephone: 429 1597

Melbourne

The strength of the bureaucratically conservative anti-Maoist forces can be seen in the checkered career of Teng Hsiao-ping. Purged as the "number two capitalist roader" during the Cultural Revolution, he re-emerged in 1973 as deputy premier and Chou En-lai's hand-picked successor. Purged again following Chou's death when his supporters rioted in Peking's Tien An Men Square, he was not arrested nor even expelled from the party. And while denouncing the "vile crimes" of the Chiang clique, the Hua regime takes care to "draw a strict distinction between the two different types of contradiction", calling only for continuing "criticism" against Teng. Now that his enemies are dead or in prison, Teng is reportedly back in Peking. No doubt we will hear more from Teng Hsiao-ping.

Chiang Ching, Wang Hung-wen and the other surviving leaders who came to power through the Cultural Revolution were essentially a *clique*. Their power rested on their personal loyalty to Mao and not on any distinctive program. The cliquist nature of the "radicals" versus "moderates" conflict is revealed in Teng's insulting nickname for Wang Hung-wen: he called Wang "the helicopter", meaning the latter had scaled the heights of power easily through Mao's favouritism, without demonstrating personal leadership capacity. However, with Mao gone, the Chiang clique was greatly weakened; its main potential source of strength was the army, which has apparently decided to go with Hua instead.

If the "radicals" are essentially the Chiang Ching clique, then the "moderates" are no definable group at all. The term "moderate" is used in the bourgeois press as a catch-all category for anyone who is not a "radical". Always included among the "moderates" are Chou En-lai, who supported Mao in the Cultural Revolution, and Teng Hsiao-ping, who was a major victim of it. Hua is now labelled a "moderate" although he first came onto the central committee as a loyal Mao supporter at the height of the Cultural Revolution, and was reportedly nominated as acting premier (to replace Teng) by none other than Chiang Ching herself. Now, even though the Chiang Ching clique has been done away with, all the significant political conflicts which have beset Chinese Stalinism for three decades will re-emerge within the "moderate" post-Mao regime.

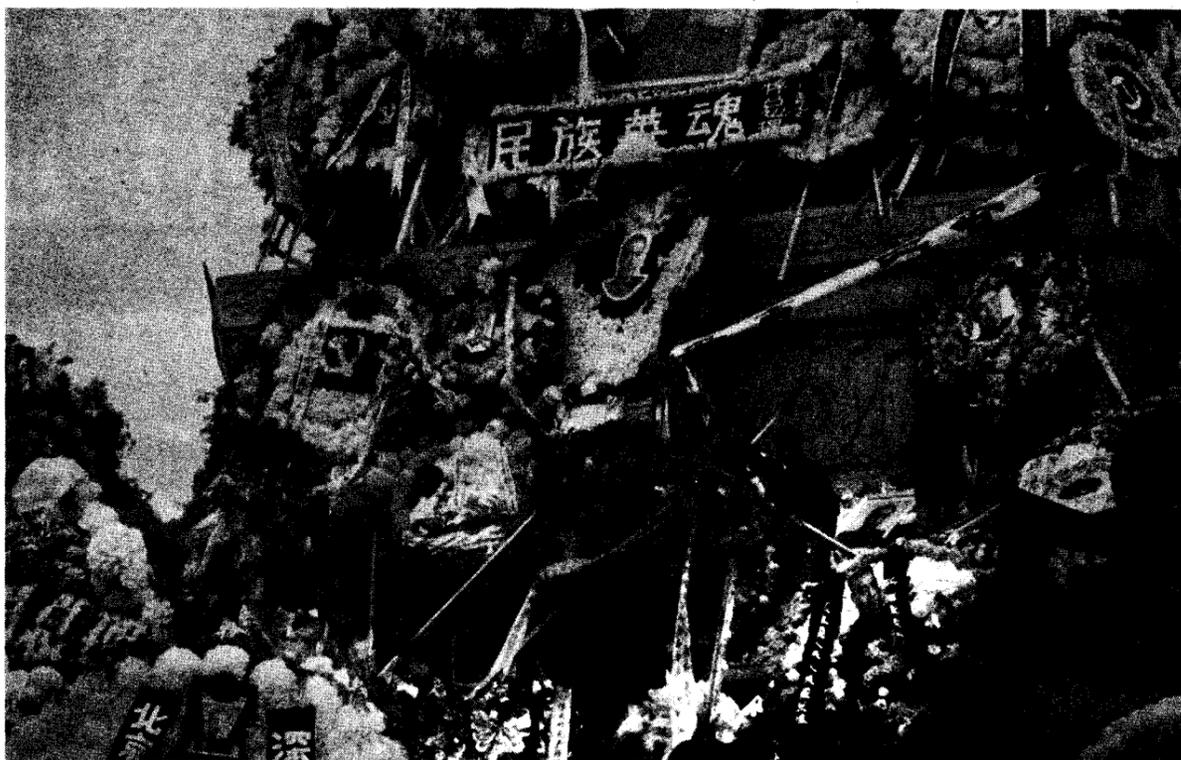
For workers' political revolution in China!

The continuity of Mao's fundamental policies can be seen in the fact that every major Chinese political figure has fulsomely supported the alliance with US imperialism against the Soviet degenerated workers state. What this means for the Australian bourgeoisie was clearly expressed in the Murdoch editorial:

"As Australia's relationship with China is one of the linchpins of our foreign policy, an essential part of the stratagem of keeping the Soviet Union at arm's length, a cool and thorough appraisal of the changes taking place is essential." (*The Australian*, 13 October)



Hua Kuo-feng, Mao's "moderate" successor.



Wreaths for Chou En-lai in Tien An Men Square; Teng was ousted by "radicals" after pro-Chou demonstrations last April.

Nonetheless the bourgeoisie's cool and thorough appraisal is punctuated by nervous speculation based on recent indications -- as, for example, when for the first time in years the Chinese ambassador to Moscow did not storm out of the Russian Revolution anniversary rallies in November -- that relations between the feuding bureaucratic regimes may ease somewhat. While the still unstable Peking regime may indeed be desirous of a slight easing of tensions with its Russian neighbour, Hua (and for that matter, Teng) has expressed firm commitment to the reactionary alliance and the pages of *Peking Review* are still replete with anti-Soviet diatribes.

What is needed in the face of the present violent power struggle in Peking is a program that can unite the working masses against all sections of the bureaucracy of the Chinese deformed workers state, a program centred on proletarian rule through soviet democracy and an internationalist extension of the revolution. A key element in such a communist program is the defence of both China and the Soviet Union against the imperialist powers. As we wrote after Mao's death:

"In the political convulsions which lie ahead, the working class must not simply act as cat's paws for one or another bureaucratic faction or clique. The mission of the Chinese proletariat is to oust the parasitic bureaucrats who are the obstacle to working-class political power, exercised through the democratic rule of soviets. It is with the aim of leading this anti-bureaucratic political revolution that a Chinese Trotskyist party must be forged." (*ASP* no 36, October 1976)

It is ironic that the latest bureaucratic purges in China were announced on the twentieth anniversary, almost to the day, of a real struggle to eliminate the entire counterrevolutionary "capitalist-roading" bureaucracy by the Hungarian workers. When the Stalinist secret police fired upon a 200,000-strong demonstration in Budapest on 23 October 1956, it sparked a spontaneous mass uprising which shattered the government apparatus and drew in its wake the majority of the army ranks and Communist Party cadre. Within days, the workers in every major industrial centre had created soviet-type workers' councils and workers' militias whose power and authority quickly outstripped that of the dissident-Stalinist Nagy regime. These workers' councils repeatedly affirmed their determination to "defend the property of the state and repulse every effort to restore the power of the landowners, the industrialists, and the bankers" while instituting workers' democracy in place of the caste rule of the parasitic Stalinist bureaucracy (see *Young Spartacus* no 48, November 1976). But the absence of a Trotskyist party left the Hungarian workers unable to consolidate a new soviet government.

For a Trotskyist party in China!

It was precisely because the working masses played an independent role in Hungary in 1956 that the Russian Stalinist bureaucracy -- with the full support of the Chinese Communist Party -- ruthlessly crushed the workers' councils and the uprising. In place of workers' councils and programmatic manifestos, the bureaucratically-controlled power plays in China are characterised by stage-managed mass hysteria and the incantation of the Chairman's proverbs with quasi-religious veneration.

But there are some "Trotskyists" who take these bureaucratic stage shows for good coin. The absence of a programmatically-based revol-

utionary vanguard to lead the Chinese masses notwithstanding, the Pabloites of the nearly defunct Communist League project the possibility of a fundamental reversal of the bureaucracy's counterrevolutionary policies. When, during the Cultural Revolution, the "radical" Red Guards mobilised behind Mao were spouting anti-bureaucratic rhetoric, the Pabloites supported the Mao faction. Now, with the masses apparently arrayed against the "radicals" they discern a "rejection of the Maoists' policy" (which, in any case, has become more difficult to enthuse over since Mao's open embrace of US imperialism) which will lead to "almost all important policies of the party and the state ... [being] re-examined, re-defined and reoriented" (*Militant*, 11 November). The Hua regime is still bureaucratic but, after all, "broad layers of the masses" were mobilised against the Chiang clique and if they "remain active" -- program or no program -- they will rapidly move towards "action completely independent of the bureaucracy". One more "broad mass vanguard" behind which these Pabloites feel compelled to tail.

The Maoist CPA(M-L) has no need for such nonsensical subterfuge about "mass action". They simply defer to bureaucratic fiat. In "hail[ing] the recent decisions of the Chinese Communist Party" they clearly attest to the role of lackies in the Stalinist movement: "What [the CCP] decides is of course, a matter for itself and no one else should presume to interfere" (*Vanguard*, 4 November).

But Mao's crown lies unsteadily on Hua's head. The source of Hua's present strength was his very insignificance before and during the Cultural Revolution -- he didn't make bitter, powerfully placed enemies. But all the factors which have convulsed the Chinese bureaucracy for two decades -- great power aspirations in the face of extreme material backwardness, the demands of the workers and peasants -- will now act with full force on Hua's unauthoritative regime.

The purge of the Chiang Ching clique is not the consolidation of a new stable regime but the beginning of a time of troubles for the Chinese bureaucracy. The Peking-loyal followers of Hua Kuo-feng today will be hailing another leader tomorrow. And only cynical, worthless boot-lickers will proclaim time after time that yesterday's "great revolutionary leaders" are today's "capitalist roaders". ■



**CHINA'S
ALLIANCE
WITH U.S.
IMPERIALISM**

A SPARTACUS
YOUTH LEAGUE PAMPHLET

\$1

Details ...

the treacherous foreign policy of Maoism, which lauds the butchery of the Ceylonese youth revolt and the Bengali independence struggle, which sacrifices the guerrillas in Oman and Eritrea for "detente" with the Shah and Ethiopian junta, which supports NATO and European militarism and Portuguese reaction, which lines up with the US/South Africa axis in Angola, which refuses support for Puerto Rican independence and lavishes aid on butcher Pinochet and the Sudanese generals ...

Counterposes ...

to Stalinism the proletarian internationalism of the Communist International of Lenin, carried forward by the Fourth International of Trotsky, and upheld today only by the international Spartacist tendency.

Order from/pay to:
Spartacist Publications, GPO Box 3473, Sydney 2001.

Break with all wings of the USec

LCR militants resign to join iSt

We reprint below the resignation of three comrades from the Ligue Communiste Revolutionnaire (LCR), French section of the "United" Secretariat of the Fourth International (USec). The LCR is the showpiece of the centrist International Majority Tendency (IMT) of the faction-ridden USec; hence, empirical oppositions which have chronically sprung up in reaction against the LCR's petty-bourgeois opportunist practice have tended to gravitate toward the IMT's main factional antagonist within the USec, the Leninist-Trotskyist Faction (L-TF) led by the reformist American Socialist Workers Party (SWP).

One such grouping, Tendency A led by Matti, felt obliged to attempt a lengthy political answer. As the Matti reply states:

"Our tendency has a particular responsibility since these comrades were politically closest to us before they began to look outside the organisation for the political answers they could not find within it....

"When they denounced the organisation's impotence when confronted with the Union of the Left, when they denounced the tactic of building the party by conquering the 'broad vanguard' and the abandonment in practice of the method of the Transitional Program *these comrades were correct.*" [emphasis in original]

Matti stresses that these comrades' resignation "is a politically serious event" as they are "valuable Trotskyist cadre" who "carried out their duty as militants of the LCR with exemplary discipline to the end". He notes that two of the comrades were long-time LCR members and part of its city leadership in Rouen. Matti's rationale for remaining within the USec is quintessential opportunism: that's where the action is.

The international Spartacist tendency and its French sympathising section, the Ligue Trotskyste de France, welcome Cochise, Clement and Thibault into the ranks of those fighting for the rebirth of the Fourth International.

[adapted from *Spartacist* (French edition) no 12, November 1976]

Statement of Resignation

Dear comrades,

The LCR stands in the programmatic continuity of Pablo/Mandel/Frank/Maitan's rejection of Trotskyism at the beginning of the 1950s, which led to the destruction of the Fourth International. This political line has been expressed in a long history of betrayals: political support to the Titos, Maos, Gomulka, Castros -- all deemed authentic anti-Stalinist revolutionaries; 15 years of entrism sui generis in Stalinist and/or social-democratic parties to pressure them to take up a revolutionary course; rejection of political revolution and thus of building Trotskyist workers' parties in the deformed workers states, for example, China, Cuba, Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos; support to the Algerian FLN and Ben Bella's bourgeois government, presented as a "workers and peasants government"; enthusiastic

embrace of petty-bourgeois guerrillaism for Latin America, Ceylon and Spain; tailing after the "new mass vanguards". But the fundamental line remains the same: *denying the need for the Leninist party, refusing to struggle to win over the working-class vanguard to the essential conclusions of the Trotskyist program, seeking to replace the Leninist party by substitutes which supposedly fight for the historic interests of the proletariat.*

Today the consequence of this Pabloist line is a perspective of fusing with the reformist [Parti Socialiste Unifie] PSU. On February 11, Pablo sent a letter to Mandel referring to a previous meeting between them, and noted: "we foresee this eventual unification in the framework of a new organisation that would not at the outset be part of any international formation...."

Four months later, Mandel wrote: "What difference do labels make? If in the political arena we encountered forces which agree with our strategic and tactical orientation and which were repulsed only by the historical reference [Trotskyism] and the name [the Fourth International], we would get rid of the latter in 24 hours" (*Politique Hebdo*, 16 June 1976).

The United Secretariat: a rotten bloc

The United Secretariat (USec) is nothing but an unprincipled bloc between the centrist International Majority Tendency (IMT) and the Leninist-Trotskyist Faction (L-TF) dominated by the reformist SWP. The USec's existence is not based on programmatic agreement but on the desire of its main elements to maintain the fiction that they represent the Fourth International. In most countries where the IMT and L-TF exist, they have already split into competing groups (Canada, Argentina, Peru, Australia, Mexico, Spain, US). The rottenness of this international conglomerate was more than amply demonstrated over Portugal, where faced with a pre-revolutionary situation the main factions of this so-called "Fourth International" took positions which led each of them to a different side of the barricades!

The IMT lined up behind the Stalinist Communist Party and the "left" generals of the bourgeois Armed Forces Movement (MFA), in August 1975 signing the infamous declaration which politically supported the Goncalves government and called for the formation of a popular front with the MFA. The reformist SWP tailed the Socialist Party, which covered for the reactionary July 1975 mobilisations against the Communists and the workers' commissions. For the SWP, this anti-Communist hysteria was a manifestation of "the most courageous" workers fighting to defend "their right to decide for themselves who will run the country and the workers organizations" (*Militant* [US], 8 August 1975) -- a position which aided the rapprochement between the SWP and OCI. These international tendencies in no way whatsoever represent Trotskyist politics.

The L-TF is led by the social-democratic SWP. During the Vietnam war, the SWP limited its in-

tervention to the slogan "immediate withdrawal of troops", a demand also supported by a section of the bourgeoisie. By failing to call on the working class to take action against the war and not calling for military victory to the NLF -- which would have damaged its bloc with liberal congressmen -- the SWP refused to oppose its "own" imperialism. It adopted feminism, a bourgeois ideology, as "revolutionary in itself" and opposed the slogan "free abortion on demand" so as not to weaken its bloc with feminist bourgeois politicians. This party's current presidential campaign has the goal of partially amending the American constitution to include a "Bill of Rights for Working People". It systematically demands sending the imperialist US army to "protect" blacks against racist attacks, and fights against the slogan of black/labour defence squads. Today its faith in bourgeois democracy leads it to campaign for "respecting the democratic rights of fascists".

The centrist nature of the IMT is clearly illuminated by its policies of tailing after popular fronts. It is now turning toward the PSU social democrats in order to form a "big" pole whose function will be the same as that of the Portuguese FUR and of "Democrazia Proletaria" in Italy: to chain the workers to the popular front while pretending to push it to the left. Drawing their arguments from the arsenal of the POUM, the IMT Pabloists refuse to characterise the Union of the Left as a popular front because the Left Radicals are only the shadow of the bourgeoisie: they thereby avoid the "unpleasant" task of struggling against the popular front, of calling for the workers' parties to break with the bourgeoisie, instead politely trying to push it to the left. As Krivine explains: "The bourgeoisie is the main adversary and we criticise the Union of the Left precisely because it doesn't really fight against the bourgeois state" (*Politique Hebdo*, 16 June 1976). Trotskyists demand that the workers' parties in a popular front break the coalition with the bourgeoisie as a precondition to being able to struggle for the workers' interests. With its line of capitulating to the popular front, the LCR leadership has no problem in forming electoral propaganda blocs with the social-democratic PSU, which is only awaiting the nod from Fabre [head of the Left Radicals] and the treacherous workers' leaders to enter the popular front on an equal footing!

If the USec is only a rotten bloc, its factions themselves are unprincipled groupings. This was clearly shown by the split between the SWP and the Argentine PST over their differences on Angola. In this war, which began as a confrontation between rival nationalists and became essentially a war between American imperialism and the troops of the Cuban deformed workers state, the PST counterposed to the SWP's pro-imperialist "neutrality" (which refused to choose between the South African-supported FNLA and the MPLA) a formally orthodox position for military victory to the MPLA/Cuban army without political support to the nationalists of the bourgeois MPLA.

This orthodoxy in Angola is only a cover for a miserably opportunist political line. The PST has denounced the Argentine guerrillas as the "reflection" of the AAA [death squads] and other ultra-rightist organisations (*Intercontinental Press*, 28 October 1974). In one of the meetings with the Argentine government, PST leader Coral promised President [Isabel] Peron that the PST would "struggle for the continuity of this government because it was elected by the Argentine workers and because it authorised the exercise of some democratic freedoms..." (*Avanzada Socialista*, 15 October 1974). In addition, the ease with which the PST slid from the L-TF toward an accommodation with the IMT -- which in Angola literally liquidated itself into the MPLA -- reveals the fundamentally unprincipled nature of the main factions in the USec.

Break with Pabloism!

None of the various current oppositions in the LCR has been capable of breaking with Pabloism. The Matti tendency presents itself as the champion of "mass work" trying to cover up its capitulation to the workers' present level of consciousness behind a facade of orthodoxy. Its program, to the right of the IMT's, is entirely contained in the "unity" panacea which leads it to put forward a minimum program in order to round up as many people as possible. Such a line opens up the possibility of a bloc with the SWP and an accommodation with the right-centrist OCI. Tendency A, although it has an "orthodox" characterisation of the Union of the Left as a popular

Whither the Communist League?

The defection of John McCarthy, founding and central leader of the Communist League (CL), Peter Robb, the editor of its paper (*Militant*) and Marcia Langton, a third member of its National Committee, to the rival affiliate of the United Secretariat (USec), the Socialist Workers Party (SWP), is an object lesson in that cynical travesty of Trotskyist politics which is Pabloism. The "principled fusion" announced in the 25 November *Direct Action*, paper of the SWP, is in fact an unprincipled amalgam by three spent and unsuccessful centrists with a group of successful reformists. The fusion statement notes that "Tactical differences remain [on the Australian situation], as do differences on international questions". In other words, as the statement explicitly states, McCarthy and his clique partners remain loyal to the SWP's factional opponent in the USec, the International Majority Tendency of Ernest Mandel, with which the organisation they split is affiliated! This latest manoeuvre is a fine exhibition of the fundamental methodology of the USec, that opportunist swamp both the CL and SWP have cohabited for years: the subordination of political principle to organisational appetites.

Four years ago, McCarthy walked out of the SWP (then the Socialist Workers League) to found the CL -- without a conclusive political fight. Now he leaves the CL to rejoin the SWP -- again without any evidence of a fight. These three leaders claim to have resigned because "the adopted perspectives of the Communist League [were being 'sabotaged'] by a minority of the organisation...". Here we have "leaders" who can neither implement their perspectives, nor discipline a sabotaging minority, nor lead a fight to get their organisation back on its tracks, nor even get a single rank-and-file member to follow them into the SWP!

The perspective referred to, for an "agitational" weekly paper, was indeed an impossible task for the tiny, undisciplined CL to implement. The charge of sabotage is a self-serving cover for McCarthy/Robb's central responsibility for the shambles they left behind. But while the personal behaviour of McCarthy, Langton and Robb is dishonest and cowardly, it in no way betrays the Mandelite tradition on which the Communist League is based. Two years ago, Mandel forced his American followers, the Internationalist Tendency, to grovel their way back into the American SWP after it had expelled them for upholding Mandelism. McCarthy and company have simply exercised more initiative. With ever crasser "unity" manoeuvres in the works, including a rumoured forthcoming fusion by both wings of the USec with the Lambertiste OCI, such experiences will doubtless be repeated by other Mandelites.

The Communist League has little future. We noted last September that the organisation might well crumble under the weight of a weekly press. Indeed the "weekly" *Militant* was never quite weekly during its brief five-issue life span and did not appear at all for two months. Now it has been resurrected as a monthly. For the remaining membership of the CL the real question posed is not how to resuscitate the dying organisation (a fourth member, Wayne Hall, defected several weeks ago to reportedly join the political bandits of the Socialist Labour League) but whether political lessons can be derived from their fiasco through a critical examination and rejection of the political methodology which took its leadership back into the SWP. Elsewhere on this page is reprinted the statement of three former members of the CL's sister section, the French Ligue Communiste Revolutionnaire, who chose the road to principled, Trotskyist politics. Members of the CL are urged to read it and think.

front, has fundamentally the same line as the IMT toward it: to push the popular front to take power, push it to the left. The Matti tendency's "orthodoxy" even leads it to term the Second Congress of the LCR as the 25th congress of the "French Section of the Fourth International" -- thus recognising that they stand in the tradition of Pabloist politics from 1952 to the present.

As for Tendency C, the fact that it is run by the reformist SWP's "Leninist-Trotskyist Faction" suffices to define its rightist character. Applying the SWP's line in France, the L-TF would probably demand that the riot police (the CRS) occupy Algerian neighbourhoods to protect them against attacks by racists! Last summer, when the Portuguese Social Democrats, with the financial support of the CIA, organised reactionary mobilisations, the L-TF covered for them and wrote that because of the Communist Party's "totalitarian methods", the Social Democrats "inevitably" had to ask support from the European socialist parties and 'democratic' capitalist governments" (August 1975 L-TF resolution, our emphasis).

This line prepares the French L-TF for the SWP's accommodation with the right-centrist OCI, which has been analysing the interests of the working class from the viewpoint of classless democracy (*Informations Ouvrieres*, 8-15 September 1976). The French L-TF avoids all questions which might embarrass the SWP, in particular the key question: the nature of the USec and its main components. The French L-TF, and even more so Tendency C*, represent attempts to build a rotten bloc between elements which support the SWP's reformist practices and militants who really criticise the LCR leadership from the left.

The Matti tendency, as well as the French L-TF, proposes to refuse to vote [in the 1977 municipal elections] for the single slates of the Union of the Left [which are required in cities of over 30,000 inhabitants]. Aside from the fact that they called for a vote for Mitterrand's "single slate" in [the] 1974 [presidential elections], there will not be two different policies presented by workers' candidates on the two different kinds of slates: they are all part of the popular front and will be presented in its name. In cities of less than 30,000 inhabitants, the Communist Party (PCF) and Socialist Party (PS) will merely ask the voters to vote for whichever workers' party is best able to govern in a coalition with the bourgeoisie!

Trotskyists do not call for votes to the candidates of a popular front, whether the candidates belong to a workers party or a bourgeois party. They must make breaking the coalition with the bourgeoisie a precondition to electoral support to the reformists. The popular front obliterates the independence of the workers' parties toward the bourgeoisie: only when this independence exists is it possible to consider voting for them.

For the Matti tendency and the French L-TF (as for the OCI), the call for a "PCF-PS government" represents a call for the popular front in power to form a government without bourgeois ministers within the parliamentary framework. For Trotskyists, the slogan "break with the bourgeoisie, take power in your own hands" makes sense only if it means: "commit yourselves to the path of forming a government based on working-class mobilisation, responsible to the working class organised in embryos of soviet power, and expropriate the bourgeoisie". The essential function of this slogan is to set the base of the reformist parties against their leaderships. But what the Matti tendency and the French L-TF are demanding is a parliamentary "workers" government!

All past oppositions [in the LCR] have capitulated before the international majority or minority because of their incapacity to make a coherent reply, based on a grasp of the nature and history of Pabloism, to the bankruptcy of the two main factions of the USec. Up until now the only tendency in France which has recognised that the USec has nothing in common with Trotsky's Fourth International was the Bolshevik-Leninist Faction for the Reconstruction of the Fourth International led by Laffitte, bureaucratically expelled in April-May 1975.

As for us, we are convinced that the only organisation which is fighting for an authentically Trotskyist program and for a democratically centralised international organisation is the *international Spartacist tendency*. We are resigning from the LCR in solidarity with the iSt and its French sympathising section, the Ligue Trotskyste de France.

*which also includes some non-L-TF members

2 October 1976

Thimbault,
secretary,
Elbeuf/Renault-Cleon section

Clement,
member of the leadership,
Elbeuf/Renault-Cleon section

Cochise,
member of the leadership,
Rouen city aggragate

Union rights . . .

Continued from page three

limited to harassing and jeering scabs and trucks.

As we pointed out last month, the strike can only be won through "militant mass picketing to shut Fairfax down tight" (*ASP*, November)! All scabbing must be stopped! The entire Fairfax empire must be shut down! The postal ban must be re-instituted and the NSW labour movement must be mobilised to defend the Fairfax strike and the arrested pickets! Fairfax is clearly intent on smashing the striking unions in order to facilitate mass retrenchments. On its own word it is acting as frontrunner for the rest of the newspaper barons with the aim of crippling the printing unions. The PKIU must be prepared to call a state-wide strike of all printers to defend the union. No retrenchments! Victory to the Fairfax strike!

Wran knives oil workers

SYDNEY -- After a concerted strikebreaking effort by ACTU President Bob Hawke and the NSW Labor Government of Premier Neville Wran, 1100 maintenance workers were finally forced on 17 November into accepting a "compromise" offer engineered by Hawke. Hawke's deal (\$2.50 wage increase and higher penalties for irregular work calls) scarcely differed from the original company proposals which the workers had overwhelmingly rejected on two previous occasions. The central demand of the strikers -- employer payment of the Medibank levy -- was successfully deferred to the Arbitration Commission and next year's wage indexation hearings for the December quarter. -- Hawke personally intervened into the dispute 5 November, calling on the workers to lift the ban and knuckle under. The maintenance men responded with a sharp rebuff five days later, voting to maintain the ban by a two-to-one majority. Sounding more like Fraser's minister for labour than head of the ACTU Hawke warned the oil workers that their action would delay the wage indexation decision and endanger the "attitude" of the Arbitration Commission.

Throughout the dispute Wran seemed intent on proving that, as one Liberal Victorian minister put it, "Neville Wran is a better Liberal Premier than Dick Hamer" (quoted in *The Australian*, 19 November). Wran threatened to impose emergency petrol requisitioning measures to guarantee industrial needs. And when spokesmen for the Metal Trades Industries Association threatened 200,000 stand downs the Labor premier made it clear whom he considered at fault: "I will be tough with any section of the community, including the unions, that imperil people's jobs ..." (*The Australian*, 16 November). A week earlier Wran had emphasised that the "State's job ... [is] to promote investment incentive ... to give business a shot in the arm" and called for federal control (*The Australian*, 10 November) -- even under a Liberal government -- over "industrial relations". So Hawke and Wran lay out their credentials for the bourgeoisie, a sharp reminder that Labor reformism offers the working class no real alternative to Fraser.

Build Newport in Toorak!

MELBOURNE -- After the Victorian Trades Hall Council (VTHC) reaffirmed its two-year-old ban on construction of the Newport power station 11 November, the Liberal Premier, Rupert Hamer, threatened to "use every counter-measure at our disposal" (*Age*, 13 November). On 17 November Hamer brought down his promised anti-union legislation and the following Tuesday announced cuts of \$417 million in public works projects for which tenders have been called, affecting 10,000 jobs, in retaliation for the ban on Newport. "The fight is not solely over the building of Newport," said Hamer as he declared war on "unrepresentative" unions which would "dictate to the elected Government". As though to prove that, the largest single cut in Hamer's punitive "counter-measures" is the Loy Yang power station.

The VTHC secretary, Ken Stone, warned Hamer after the legislation was introduced that a national strike "was not now beyond the realms of possibility" (*The Australian*, 18 November). But at a meeting the following evening, the VTHC voted merely to condemn the legislation while raising an abstract call for the unity of the ACTU and the labour movement in opposing it. Communist Party of Australia member and AMWU state secretary John Halfpenny simply kept quiet. A week later -- after Hamer had announced his project cuts -- the only action moved by the Council was a campaign of meetings and newspaper advertisements, and an offer to "discuss alternatives" with Hamer. A motion to exclude construction of Newport from the "alternatives" was defeated. Halfpenny, who was initially rabidly opposed to Newport, did not even vote for the amendment. Thus, not only have they backed down on the ban but these spineless bureaucrats will not even defend their own organisations. An immediate state-wide general strike must be called to defeat Hamer's attacks!

For months Stone has been scrambling for a "compromise" to avert a collision with Hamer by trading off the ban for a scaled-down power station half the capacity of the originally projected 1000 megawatt station. At a 28 October VTHC meeting a tense tie vote on Stone's proposal was ruled by the chair to mean maintenance of the ban, and the subsequent re-vote 11 November was carried by four votes.

The argument over Newport has raged for years. The state government claims Victoria will suffer a power shortage if Newport is not built within two years. Opponents claim the state has inflated projections of future power needs. Communists in general favour technological advances which are not carried through at the expense of the working class. We have no sympathy for the utopian longings of many petty-bourgeois environmentalists to return to the pristine idiocy of pre-industrial life. But neither is it the task of working-class militants to advise the bourgeoisie on how to satisfy its industrial needs. The determined opposition to Newport, particularly by ALP branches in the working-class district of Gellibrand where it would be built, indicates a significant section of the community's residents do not want the plant there. In any case, irrespective of the merits of the opposing arguments, the labour movement must defend any industrial action taken against Newport from bourgeois attack. If Hamer is convinced Newport "must be built" let him build it in Toorak! Defeat Hamer's attacks! Defend the ban! For a state-wide general strike to defend the Victorian union movement! ■

Argentine . . .

Continued from page eight

of the Communist Party and the bourgeois parties? In any case it is dangerously disorienting to make a sharp distinction between Pinochet and Videla.

While warning against the illusions spread by Moreno and company in the "margins of legality" tolerated by the military dictatorship (similar to the PST's earlier illusions in the "democracy" of the bonapartist Peron regime), and exposing their shifting attitude toward guerrillaism (in contrast to the Spartacist tendency's opposition to guerrillaism from the standpoint of proletarian mass mobilization, not social-democratic bourgeois legalism), we also call for the defense of PST and other left-wing victims of junta repression. It has been reported recently (*Intercontinental Press*, 25 October) that at least four PST militants have been assassinated under the junta, and scores more have disappeared. Among those arrested, two of the most prominent are PST auto workers' leader Jose Paez and metal workers' leader Arturo Apaza. Socialists and union militants throughout the world must take up their cause. Free Paez and Apaza and all class-war prisoners in Argentina! ■
(abridged from *Workers Vanguard* no 133, 12 November 1976)

Australasian

SPARTACIST



Subscribe 12 issues — \$2

NAME _____
ADDRESS _____
CITY _____ STATE _____
POSTCODE _____

mail to/make cheques payable to:

Spartacist Publications,
GPO Box 3473,
Sydney, NSW, 2001.



Argentine Junta unable to stifle workers' unrest



General Jorge Videla

Early October Argentine President General Jorge Videla and about 50 other dignitaries had no sooner ended a ceremony at the Campo de Mayo army base and stepped down from the reviewing stand than a powerful bomb explosion demolished it. Ironically retired army General Eduardo Catan, chairman of the army communications committee, had just delivered a speech describing the government's decisive victory over the guerrillas that had allegedly reduced their capabilities to mere scattered acts of "indiscriminate" terrorism.

To emphasize that they were far from liquidated (though certainly weakened by the junta's blows), left-wing guerrillas set off more than 100 explosive devices in and around Buenos Aires on Sunday night, October 17 (a traditional Peronist holiday). But the military rulers have a more fundamental threat to preoccupy them: Argentine workers are unwilling and unable to remain passive in the face of the government's assault. In September auto workers struck for wage increases, spitting on the 12 per cent pittance the government offered in the face of a more than 67 per cent decline in real wages over the last year. Though troops suppressed the strike, the explosive potential of such confrontations was evident.



Striking auto workers demonstrating in Buenos Aires last year.

A few days after Videla's close call at Campo de Mayo, Buenos Aires electricity plant workers began a strike that threatened the power supply of the nation's capital. Carrying out the junta's policy of rationalizing public enterprises by firing "dispensable" workers, the state-owned SEGBA power company sparked the conflict October 4 with the dismissal of more than 200 workers, including the entire union executive committee and a large number of stewards. For almost a month the 7000 workers of the formerly powerful but now outlawed Luz y Fuerza union fought back in self-defense with work slowdowns and sitdowns throughout Buenos Aires.

Troops occupied power stations ejecting some strikers and forcing others to work at gunpoint. By the end of the month the army had reportedly smashed the strike -- at least 40 workers had been fired for their role in the strike and around 500 had been punitively suspended. But it was clearly not the end of labor resistance to the junta. Military officials were quite disturbed by the evident support for the strikers' tactics both from the ousted Luz y Fuerza union leadership and the clandestine General Labor Federation in the Resistance (CGTR) which held a week of protests from October 17 to 24; "lightning strikes", slowdowns, work-to-rules and absenteeism.

The status quo in Argentina continues to be escalating repression, and the internal military power struggle between "moderates" and "hard-liners" goes on. *Le Monde* estimates a minimum of 30 kidnappings by rightist death squads a day,

though they may no longer ostentatiously sign their work with the insignia of the Argentine Anti-Communist Alliance (AAA) or the "Comandos Libertadores de America". Notorious hard-line right-winger General Ramon Diaz Bessone is now the ranking cabinet member and was deputized last week to replace Videla during temporary absences.

Nevertheless the guerrilla groups continue to be a thorn in the side of the military and the ruling class. *Latin America* (8 October) articulates the concern that the "high level of guerrilla activity in Argentina ... would be impossible without massive popular resistance to the military junta". But far higher levels of urban terrorism by Peronist unionists in the late 1950s were unable to bring down even less determined military regimes.

The Castroite PRT/ERP (Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores/Ejercito Revolucionario del Pueblo) of Mario Roberto Santucho and the left-Peronist guerrillaists on the other hand, practically hailed the Videla junta, since it largely eliminated their competition from left-wing parties and militant unionists and allowed the guerrillas to "get down to business" with a nakedly repressive regime.

At the time we compared this criminal, ostrich-like "after Videla, us" optimism to Stalin's treacherous immobility in the face of Hitler's rise to power in the early 1930s (see "The Bloody Repression Behind 'Gentlemen's Coup' in Argentina", *Workers Vanguard* no 110, 21 May).

Though class-collaborationist Stalinist illusions continue to form the foundation of the PRT/ERP's politics, Santucho did endeavor a revealing "self-criticism" a few months after the coup:

"To the extent that we did not foresee a temporary retreat of the workers and mass mobilisation and instead gave the impression that the masses would immediately react powerfully against the dictatorship, and the dictatorship would be immediately isolated inter-

nationally, and that moreover there would be a rapid approach of the democratic forces toward the revolutionary camp, we proved to be ideologically and organizationally insufficient for the new national situation." (*EL Combatiente*, 9 June 1976)

The PRT/ERP paid a high price for these illusions: six weeks later Santucho was slaughtered by government forces and much of the group's central leadership was destroyed.

On the other hand, the PST (Partido Socialista de los Trabajadores) of Nahuel Moreno has done an about-face of its own. Previously it had condemned left-wing guerrillas as the "mirror image" of the AAA in a grovelling attempt to demonstrate its respectability to the Peronist government, whose continuity it pledged to defend. The PST had been formed through a fusion with a wing of the moribund Argentine social democracy, and was internationally linked with the American SWP in the reformist minority faction of the fake-Trotskyist "United Secretariat". But now chances for electoral activity are nil and the PST is in the process of switching over to the centrist international majority of the USec, so its theoretician Nahuel Moreno has softened his line on guerrillaism.

In an interview in the Portuguese PRT's *Combate Socialista* (15 October) Moreno writes that:

"We disagree with Montonero [left-Peronist] terrorism, but it cannot be excluded that if the petty bourgeoisie continues to radicalize and there is no historic defeat of the prolet-

ariat and the people, the Montonero guerrilla struggle may become the expression of a wing of this process of radicalization."

It's not yet a Mandeliste-Castroite line, but this is quite a distance from the PST's previous virulently anti-guerrilla tirades, which were infused with social-democratic legalism; in the elliptical language of USec polemics this is clearly intended to open the door for a qualified approval of guerrillaism under certain circumstances. Has the PST itself undergone a "process of radicalization" under the impact of the March 24 coup? Moreno should like to have us think that it's just a question of changed circumstances.

It was one thing, he says, when the ERP and Montoneros attacked a government "elected by 75 per cent of the population and supported by 95 per cent of the population ..."; "it's something completely different [when] ... there exists today a dictatorial regime, without a bourgeois-democratic margin..." Today the Montoneros' activity is "inserted in the general struggle against a reactionary government". For all his talk of how a military dictatorship supposedly changes everything, it should be recalled that Moreno has opposed guerrillaism since 1968 (before that he was an enthusiastic armchair guerrillaist), and there were reactionary military dictatorships in Argentina from 1968 to 1973. It is not only the political climate that has changed -- Moreno's factional maneuvers are equally important in explaining this shift.

In the same interview, Moreno goes to some length to assert that the Videla junta is not another Pinochet regime, that "although quite reactionary, it is obliged to concede certain legal margins from time to time". The Videla coup is "not a historic defeat for the Argentine proletariat", he adds. The "proof" is that there is still large-scale working-class resistance (the auto and electricity workers' strikes) and so far no mass unemployment.

In past articles we have pointed to examples of working-class protest in Argentina as a sign that possibilities for mass resistance to the junta butchers still exist. Moreover, we indicated that there might be a drawn-out shift to the right. But we urgently pointed to the stepped up tempo of assassinations by the anti-communist death squads and the threat posed to left-wing political refugees in particular; we warned that behind Videla there stood numerous bloodthirsty Pinochetistas straining at the bit.

Why does Moreno make this distinction? He mentions the fact -- as a proof of "margins of legality" under Videla -- that the legally recognized parties have not been outlawed (only declared "in recess"), *except for the PST*. Is Moreno angling to obtain the "tolerated" status

Continued on page seven

FORUM

"Kerr's coup" one year after

perspectives for building a
revolutionary party

Speaker: Bill Logan

Room 5
Trades Hall
Sydney

7.30 pm
2 December