

Australasian SPARTACIST



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TWENTY CENTS



Left: Melbourne workers march on Industrial Court the day Clarrie O'Shea was jailed in 1969; penal powers have gathered dust since O'Shea was freed by near-general strike.



Right: cops attack Builders' Labourers (BLF) march in Sydney, 1974. The Arbitration Commission proved once again that it serves only the bosses when it deregistered BLF, allowing the militant NSW branch to be smashed. Fraser's IRB will re-activate and extend hated penal powers of Arbitration.

For a general strike to stop Fraser's industrial police!

No new penal powers!

On 2 February the government announced its intention to introduce legislation establishing a so-called Industrial Relations Bureau (IRB). With unemployment and inflation soaring, Liberal prime minister Malcolm Fraser has launched the most serious attempt to cripple the strength of the union movement in decades.

Back in November 1974 when he was the Liberal opposition spokesman on Industrial Relations, Fraser produced a policy draft intended to strengthen the then ineffectual penal powers of the Conciliation and Arbitration Act through the creation of such a bureau. While Fraser has withheld details of the new legislation, that document -- which became Liberal Party policy -- is quite specific regarding the proposed scope of the IRB. It is intended to be a "third arm" of the arbitration machinery with the power to prosecute unions in the Industrial Court for breaches of industrial law. The "unfair practices" which will be liable to prosecution by the IRB cover the gamut of industrial tactics: striking against an arbitration decision or in any way refusing to accept arbitration procedures; picketing; imposing black bans or any other form of solidarity strike action; as well as compulsory unionism. The "right" of a union member to scab during a strike will be legally "protected". The Industrial Court will have the power to deregister unions, garnishee union funds, bar elected union officials from holding office and facilitate court actions by employer groups or individuals for damages against unions.

The attack does not end with the creation of the IRB. A proposed alteration to the Trade Practices Act would outlaw "hindering or preventing the supply of goods or services to a corporation ... which has a substantial adverse affect on the business of the corporation" (quoted in the *National Times*, 7-12 February). The proposed penalties for inflicting "adverse affects" on corporations are massive fines, with a provision for "injured Parties" to recover huge damages from the offender, ie the unions. Yet the ACTU has proposed no concrete action to repel this attack.

Should this legislation be allowed to pass as a result of the treacherous passivity of the labour bureaucracy it will give Fraser the advan-

tage in choosing the time and setting for a "legal" offensive to smash the unions -- to pave the way for an unchallenged assault on living standards and working conditions. Workers cannot allow their unions to be crippled because of "their" slothful bureaucrats. The IRB and Trade Practices amendment bills must never enter the statute books. *The ACTU must call a nationwide general strike to smash the bills -- down with all penal provisions!* Any response short of a general strike is a policy for retreat. The pro-capitalist labour bureaucrats cannot be trusted to carry out an effective strike. Strike action must be prepared and co-ordinated by rank-and-file elected committees on every job site and in every factory.

The Fraser government's attack on basic trade-union rights comes after a year of sustained assault on workers' living standards. Real wages have been cut through "plateau" indexation, Medibank has been dismantled and other essential social services have been severely pruned. The bureaucracy has refused to mobilise the ranks in struggle -- not one serious fight against layoffs, meek acquiescence to the indexation fraud, token protest over Medibank. The necessary fight for a shorter workweek at no loss in pay would threaten to sweep the bureaucracy away in a wave of militant action, and so the growing army of unemployed is left to fend for itself, set up by the bureaucrats for eventual use by the bosses as a scab army against the unions.

Four months ago the bureaucracy demonstrated its incapacity to deal with provocative anti-

union legislation by backing down on the Newport power station ban under threat of Victorian Liberal premier Rupert Hamer's Vital States Projects Bill (see "Union rights under attack", *ASP* no 38). A leader of the climb-down was John Halfpenny, Amalgamated Metal Workers and Shipwrights Union (AMWSU) bureaucrat and Communist Party (CPA) member. While the Victorian legislation is presently in abeyance -- having served its purpose of smashing the Newport ban -- it, and similarly comprehensive union-bashing bills introduced by the other L/NCP governments in Western Australia and Queensland, clearly acted as trial balloons for Fraser's current legislation.

Last November's war of nerves with the union bureaucracy was a clear win for Fraser, portending another round of capitulation. ACTU president Bob Hawke, while blustering that the IRB "as it stands" will lead to a "head-on" confrontation, has downplayed the Fraser proposal as a "diversionary" move by an "inept" government (*Australian*, 9 February). As for the "left" union leaders, the Federated Engine Drivers and Firemen's Association has simply called for a complete embargo on supplying information to the IRB as though it will thus somehow be made unworkable. This "head in the sand" proposal was endorsed by the CPA in an editorial in *Tribune* (9 February).

Attempts to dismiss the Fraser legislation as a "diversion" which can be ignored until its full power is brought crashing down on the unions rep-

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**Rightist terror
in Spain**

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**Avenge Soweto —
smash apartheid!**

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AUS January Council — playpen for junior reformists

Once a year the politicians and student bureaucrats of Australian universities and colleges make their annual pilgrimage to January Council, the governing body of Australian Union of Students (AUS). Behind the annual week-long wild spree of motion-passing lies the real business of jockeying for financial grants and bureaucratic sinecures in the AUS hierarchy. The grab-bag of contradictory motions passed by this menagerie is given some minimal semblance of compatibility only by the rule that with contradictory motions the one passed latest in the proceedings is operative!

While the Maoist-led Students for Australian Independence was in the ascendancy at this year's council, most political tendencies had at least a few motions passed to parade around when they re-

letter

Dear Comrades:

Your articles on the Fairfax strike were correct in emphasising how crucially important mass pickets are in the struggles of the working class. The point must be hammered home that any worker -- no matter how precarious his or her job protection may be -- who crosses a picket line is a scab. However it would be useful to point out the particularly oppressed position of the apprenticed workers you refer to as having crossed the lines at Fairfax [see "Why Fairfax Workers Lost", *ASP* no 39, February 1977] and how the union bureaucrats set them up for scabbing.

Besides being bonded to one employer or "master" for up to four years and having to work for token wages, apprentices have few union rights and are *legally required to work during strikes*. Most unions, including the PKIU [Printing and Kindred Industries Union] not only agree to all this, they actively foster the apprenticeship system as a means of "protecting" skilled crafts. This means that apprentices are both a form of cheap labour and a scab force that is promoted and recognised by the union movement itself, even though this contradicts the principle on which militant unionism is based -- one out, all out. Without any moralistic liberal sympathy for those apprentices who do scab it is in the interests of all workers to fight for the abolition of this system which encourages scabbing and to demand full union rights for apprentices, including the right to strike. Indentures must be done away with and all training must be carried out at full wages.

The shameless scabbery by apprentices and members of unions whose bureaucrats refused to call them out helped lay the basis for the defeat at Fairfax. It must end. The reformist bureaucracy responsible for it must be replaced by a leadership committed to class-struggle principles.

Comradely,

RR, PKIU member

turned to their respective campuses. An anti-Maoist bloc consisting of the Socialist Youth Alliance (SYA -- youth appendage of the Socialist Workers Party), Communist Party and others failed in an attempt to reverse a motion which the Maoists pushed through last year characterising the USSR as "social-imperialist". However another piece of Maoist anti-Sovietism -- a motion opposing the presence of "all foreign military bases" and the "superpowers" arms race -- was simply amended by the fake-Trotskyists of the SYA to delete mention of the USSR or "superpowers". They ignored the mandatory Trotskyist call for military defence of the Soviet Union in favour of a limp social-pacifist, implicitly third-campist plea against Australian involvement in the "nuclear arms race". But they did succeed in passing a motion which condemned Australian nationalism as reactionary. Undaunted by this rebuff the Maoists, in their "patriotic" class-collaborationist effort to "rid" Australian capitalist oppression of "foreign interference", moved another for "a truly independent democratic republic of Australia" and "opposing the effects of the November 11, 1975 semi-fascist coup". Rather than oppose this nationalist motion in toto the anti-Maoist bloc merely amended it -- to delete "semi-fascist" "Trotskyism" for the apprentice wheelers and dealers of the SYA consists in making Maoist patriotism palatable for the liberal student milieu.

The SYA, the Maoists and the rest are united in portraying this political vaudeville show as the national deliberative body of ... a union. Indeed, for the SYA, ensconced in various student editorial offices and AUS "service" organisations, students are not only workers but AUS, as they proclaim with a perfectly straight face, is "one of the largest unions in the country". But AUS is not a union and students are not workers. They do not produce surplus value or play any part in the production and distribution of commodities and therefore lack the concentrated social power of the proletariat, which has the capacity and the objective class interest both to stop capitalist production and to fight for socialism.

Students are a socially heterogeneous group -- they are neither inherently progressive nor inherently left-wing. Hitler conquered the German universities ideologically long before he captured the Reichstag. In a general social crisis they will split along class lines, not as a product of "student issues" but as they are drawn to either of the two great contending forces outside the universities: the proletariat or the bourgeoisie. Insofar as AUS and the student organisations on which it is based do not themselves become reactionary tools aimed against the workers movement, communists defend the existence of these all-inclusive student organisations. But we recognise that precisely for the same reasons that they are not workers unions, they are likely to be wrenched apart at the onset of decisive class battles.

Behind the SYA's mutilation of elementary Marxism is a transparent opportunist appetite. The SYA's work in the student "union" is a demonstration of the sort of social-democratic betrayals which it could carry out on behalf of the bosses if entrusted with influence at the head of the proletariat. For example, the SYA introduced a motion that students stand for a policy of "fighting" layoffs through the "nationalisation under workers control" of those firms sacking workers. When criticised for not calling for the

nationalisation of companies *not* sacking workers, an SYAer blandly replied that this was a program for "bankruptcy and layoffs, not socialism in ten weeks"! Here we have an apprentice bureaucrat's practised assurance to the bourgeoisie that, given the chance, she would divert the struggle against unemployment -- which is endemic to capitalism -- from a proletarian mobilisation which sought to smash the bourgeois state to a social-democratic facelift involving a handful of nationalisations.

What concerns the bourgeoisie about AUS is not its social power but the irritation of seeing a bunch of left-talking student bureaucrats running a large and well-funded national organisation. Should left-wing activists threaten to undermine the universities' capacity to transmit bourgeois ideology -- to train the future ideologues and administrators of capitalist society -- the bourgeoisie would be quite prepared to smash AUS and, in the extreme, shut down the universities. Faced with increasing class tensions, the ruling class is also finding the "left" AUS a convenient foil for whipping up an anti-communist witchhunt atmosphere.

When the ever-present minority of DLP/right-wing wreckers at January Council spread allegations, primarily directed at the Maoists, that the "violence-prone" left had shoved them around they found powerful allies in their red-baiting attacks on AUS in several newspapers. With the lurid sub-heading "Phoney student thugs use spit and abuse to create terror[!]" the *Australian* (29 January), which has been campaigning against AUS since last year, conjured up the spectre of violent, perverted and crazed communist students subverting capitalist order. Any attempt by the bourgeois state to intervene in AUS or move against student leftists, a move heralded by the press campaign, must be firmly resisted.

For the reformists -- whether Maoist or fake-Trotskyist -- the AUS offers a showcase to demonstrate their treacherous "responsibility" to the bourgeoisie; and a training ground for the students they recruit to become potential trade-union research officers, editorialists and organisers skilled in the slick and cynical manoeuvres which are the stock-in-trade of left-talking bureaucrats. Communists have a different aim: to recruit students to the worldview of revolutionary Trotskyism -- the program of international working-class revolution.

When Maoists at the University of New South Wales organised an anti-Soviet demonstration to greet Soviet academic Yuri Zamoshkin on campus last September, the "respectable" SYA apologetically pleaded his right to "free speech". It was the campus Spartacist Club which initiated a counter-demonstration in defence of the Soviet Union aimed at fighting anti-communism in the context of winning students to the Trotskyist program of proletarian political revolutions to overthrow the repressive Stalinist bureaucracies in the Sino-Soviet states. The Spartacist League has actively intervened in struggles for the needs of the majority of students, for increased stipends and against education cut-backs -- because we recognise that the proletarian vanguard must champion the needs of all the oppressed. And instead of promoting social-democratic schemes for "fighting" unemployment we fight to win students to genuine support of working-class struggles through campus strike support work.

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CP aids Bandaranaike repression

Mass strikes suppressed in Sri Lanka

by Edmund Samarakkody

COLOMBO -- The railway workers' strike which paralysed the railway services for nearly 30 days, and the strikes in other government departments and workplaces -- involving in all over 75,000 employees on the issues of loans, wage increases, etc -- ended in the face of severe repression by the SLFP/CP [Sri Lanka Freedom Party/Communist Party] coalition regime, facilitated by the treachery of the CP and SLFP trade-union leaders, and the failure of the LSSP [Lanka Sama Samaja Party] to sustain and develop the strike movement.

However, what was dramatically manifest in these strikes was that the ever-rising cost of living in conditions of virtual wage freeze had reached the breaking point for workers and wage earners, both in the government and private sectors, and that large sections of the workers in the trade unions had taken the first steps to bypass their reformist leaders, to take the road of struggle as the means of winning their pressing demands.

What commenced as agitation by a group of workers in the major railway workshops (Ratmalana) on the issue of a loan of Rs 500 to meet especially the high costs of school books for their children, and also the rising costs of food and other essential consumer goods, soon became a strike of all workers in the workshops at this factory on December 15, involving over 5000 workers.

Railway strikes spread

Within a week, this strike spread to the other railway workshops in Colombo and the out-lying stations; simultaneously, engine drivers, railway guards, station masters and other sections of railway workers -- in all, over 26,000 workers -- brought the railway services to a complete standstill on December 21.

The strike at this stage was sponsored by the United Front of the Railway Trade Unions, and the issue was not the single demand of a loan. Eight other demands, including wage demands, were raised by the striking unions.

That the issue of increased wages was a burning question for all government workers soon became manifest by the escalation of the strike movement to include workers of numerous government departments and workplaces: the port of Colombo, two government-owned machine tool factories, telecommunications and government clerical services -- including such services in the local governments, the municipal councils, town councils, etc -- involving over 30,000 hands, and also a partial strike of "bus" workers of the Ceylon Transport Board.

While workers and employees of other government workplaces were readying themselves for strike action, both in sympathy with railway workers and also on their own demands, wide sections of workers in the private sector were pressuring their respective leaderships to take strike decisions.

The significant feature of the railway strike as well as the other strikes that followed was that it was propelled by a rank and file movement. The several union leaderships which included the LSSP, CP, SLFP, and UNP moved to sponsor the railway strike only after the strike had taken place.

What was specially noteworthy was the high degree of militancy displayed by the strikers. Striking workers in all strikebound places defied the government's "essential service order", in terms of which they were to lose their jobs through participation in strikes declared illegal by this order. They were also exposed by the same order to court charges, imprisonment and confiscation of property.

Nor was there any doubt in regard to the strength of the strike movement and the impact of the strikes on the government-organised public services. Here is what Prime Minister Bandaranaike had to say in her message to the nation on December 29, even before the strikes spread to the government clerical services, etc:

"The public have already suffered as a result of the railway strike. The crippling of the railway services does not only mean incon-

venience to passengers, especially office workers, but it also seriously affects the movement of food, fuel and other vital commodities, such as fertiliser, which are all so essential to the life of the community. Already, shortages of rice and serious shortages of kerosene have been reported from various areas of the country as a result of the dislocation of the railway services.... Added to all this, the strike has affected refuelling at B.I.A. (Bandaranaike International Airport) and the provision of bunkers to ships resulting in loss of foreign exchange at this critical time...."

In this context, there was a real possibility of the strikes being developed into a general strike against the government on economic as well as political issues, such as ending of the State of Emergency and the restoration of democratic rights, and the release of all political prisoners, which were the subject matter of previous agitation especially by the LSSP and other left parties and groups outside the coalition alliance.

Government resorts to open repression

The reaction of the Bandaranaike government to the strikes was not difficult to guess. Far from being ready to grant any wage concessions to the workers, the government was categorical in its denunciation of the strikes as unreasonable and unjustified, and that they were politically motivated. On the other hand, as the smashing of the trade unions and the left movement was the government's perspective, these strikes could well be an opportunity to take some meaningful steps in that regard.

For the government there were two possible ways of seeing an end to the strikes: one through the fizzling out of the strikes and the other through government repression.

Far from showing any signs of fizzling out, even after 15 days the strike movement was growing and widening, with newer sections joining it. It soon became obvious to the government that repression was the only means to end the strikes. However, the government understood that sometimes repressive measures could well escalate strikes, leading to real confrontations with the organised working-class movement.

But the government had sufficient knowledge in regard to the quality of the trade-union leaderships in this strike, not to entertain unnecessary fear concerning the resort to repression. The truth about these strikes was that they were leaderless. In such a context, government repression would very probably lead not to confrontation but to disintegration of the strike movement. And that was precisely what happened.

In regard to the SLFP trade-union leaderships, they were in the strikes only because their workers were participating in a real way in the strikes, but these leaderships were out to break these strikes both from within and from outside the unions. The SLFP trade-union bureaucrats did not hesitate to denounce the strikes and called upon their members not to remain in the strike which was "politically motivated". But it was by no means easy to get their workers out of the strikes.

CP leader: full support to repression

The reaction of the SLFP workers to the directions from their trade-union bureaucrats to become black legs was significant. They not only openly rejected this treacherous call, but they also brought home to these leaders graphically what they thought of their leaders. SLFP strikers put up posters in Colombo offering a reward to anyone who succeeded in arresting their leader, Alavi Moulana, who was the chief organiser of black legs for the government!

The CP adopted a more shameful but more treacherous tactic. After observing deliberate silence during the first few days of the railway strike, the CP paper *Attha* began to give screaming headlines indicating their support for the strikes. What is more, this paper sought to impress that it was the CP that was in the leadership in this strike movement!

However, while the CP leader and Housing Minister Keuneman gave full support to the Bandaranaike cabinet to smash the strike through severe repressive measures, CP leaders in the

strike committees did everything possible to contain, weaken the strikes and discourage the workers from continuing the strikes. This treacherous role of the CP could not be concealed from the workers and several leading CPers in the strike committees suffered physical assaults at the hands of the strikers.

While the LSSP had a need to strengthen its trade-union base, especially since its sacking from the coalition alliance in September 1975, the leadership of this party (like that of the CP and other reformist parties and trade unions) was only ready to countenance limited strikes and not at all any strike movement that had potentialities of leading to anything like a confrontation with the bourgeois state. The real problem for the LSSP in this strike movement was to create the impression that it was in the leadership while doing nothing to sustain or widen it.

It was pressure from the ranks of the government clerical services that pushed the LSSP-led Government Clerical Services Union, jointly with other clerical unions, to launch strike action on January 6. It was in order to launch this strike that the LSSP-led trade union federations -- the Ceylon Federation of Labour, the Government Clerical Services Union, and the Government Workers Trade Union Federation -- held the only workers' rally in support of the strikes.

Nor was it just sectarianism on its part that prevented the LSSP from taking steps to win the participation of other big trade unions and federations under different leaderships in this struggle. The truth is that the LSSP did not want to broaden this strike. It had no perspectives of a general strike although its paper *Janadina* frequently referred to the need for a general strike in the situation. The LSSP long ago lost all perspective of mass struggle against the capitalist class and the capitalist state. That is why the LSSP failed even to make a pretense of calling together the unions and federations of the JCTUO (Joint Council of Trade Union Organisations -- the coalition trade-union centre) which was disrupted by Sirima Bandaranaike after the 20 February 1976 token general strike.

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Political asylum for Hishamuddin Rais!

Malaysian student leader Hishamuddin Rais has been under threat of deportation since his arrest in Melbourne 16 January on trumped-up charges. Although the charges have now been dropped, he faces indefinite imprisonment and torture in Malaysia if deported. The circumstances of Rais's arrest and the character of the charges clearly indicated a frame-up attempt and surveillance by Australian police in collusion with the reactionary Malaysian regime.

Rais's petty-bourgeois nationalist politics cannot advance the interests of the oppressed Malaysian masses, but the victimisation of this personally courageous militant by the Australian and Malaysian bourgeoisies is a blow against militant students and workers of both countries. The labour movement must be mobilised to assure that Rais is granted full rights of asylum. The following telegram was sent by the Spartacist League to federal prime minister Fraser and Victorian premier Hamer on 17 February, before the trial:

"Demand immediate political asylum for militant Malaysian student leader Hishamuddin Rais and the dropping of four phony charges against him by the Victoria police. Australian police have provided every aid to the reactionary Malaysian regime, which seeks Hishamuddin Rais' indefinite incarceration in Malaysia to silence his left-wing views. No deportation of Hishamuddin Rais!
"Hishamuddin Rais and all foreign students and migrants should be granted full citizenship rights immediately. End all government surveillance of foreign students and migrants and all Australian cooperation with the reactionary Malaysian despots!
"No deportations! For immediate political asylum for Hishamuddin Rais! Drop the charges!"

For more information write: Overseas Student Service, 97 Drummond Street, Carlton, Victoria 3053.

Mandelites in retreat . . .

Reformist "fusions" in USec

CL under sentence

The so-called United Secretariat (USec), an international federation of renegades from Trotskyism, has long falsely posed as the continuation of the Fourth International. In recent years a "cold split" between the European-based centrist wing led by Ernest Mandel and a reformist minority under the political tutelage of the American Socialist Workers Party (SWP) has punctured the USec's image of a united "international". Mandel has proclaimed his readiness to dump the "label" of the "Fourth International" "in 24 hours" (*Politique Hebdo*, 16 June 1976) for opportunities outside the USec. But the latest in a long series of internal manoeuvres is a factional "reconciliation" and Mandel is concerned with "unity" now.

Reprinted below is an article from *Spartacist Canada*, monthly organ of the Trotskyist League of Canada, our Canadian comrades, concerning the imminent dissolution of the Canadian Mandeliste Revolutionary Marxist Group (RMG) into the reformist pro-SWP League for Socialist Action (LSA). Mandel's Australian followers in the Communist League (CL) have been moving toward a similar fate since the ongoing "fusion" with the LSA's counterpart here, the Australian SWP, was begun by the defection of former CL leader John McCarthy last November. (The SWP claims at least 11 former CLers have joined up.) Mandel's imprimatur is reflected in greetings to the SWP's fifth national conference from the British and French Mandeliste groups as well as from the USec itself welcoming the process of unification (*Direct Action*, 17 February). The formal dissolution of the hemorrhaging CL may soon be forthcoming.

When the CL was formed more than four years ago, its members rejected the gross class collaborationism of the then Socialist Workers League and fruitlessly sought an alternative in the Mandel wing of the USec. Now Mandel and company unite in chorus to urge what remains of the CL to reject any considerations of principle and rejoin -- without even a pretence of an attempt to draw the balance sheet.

In ex-CL leader Peter Robb's deceitful, self-serving and hypocritical article on the "fusion" (*Direct Action*, 10 February), we find reference to "significant differences on Portugal, Angola and other international questions" which however "can be contained and resolved within a party united for revolutionary action". What sort of "revolutionary action" could possibly have "united" them in Portugal in 1975 -- when the SWP promoted the Socialist Party which, funded by CIA money, was busy orchestrating a campaign of anti-communist violence against the Stalinist Communist Party -- attacking and burning its offices -- behind which rallied the co-thinkers of the CL? Had they been in Portugal, supporters of the CL and SWP would have been shooting at each other from opposing sides of the battle lines. In Angola, where the CL's co-thinkers in the MPLA were being fired upon by South African troops, SWP supporters would have maintained a position of neutrality!

Although the centrist politics of the CL never posed a revolutionary alternative to the SWP, CLers have generally in the past recognised that the SWP is rotten. Will members of the CL now stomach the SWP's reactionary defence of "free speech for fascists", or its demand that the bourgeois army "defend" the oppressed black masses in Boston? Are they now prepared to help set the oppressed up for slaughter by blinding them with illusions in the "neutrality" of the oppressors' state and tying the hands of the proletariat with liberal moralism and democratic deceptions?

Those CL members who reject the prospect of a shoddy, dishonest, capitulatory "fusion" with the SWP must of necessity break with the USec. But to split organisationally from the USec -- because of the putrid deal dealt them by Mandel -- is not enough. Without confronting the question of why the USec is not revolutionary they will only find themselves drifting into irrelevancy -- a tiny, disoriented, isolated centrist group. The roots of the degeneration of which the

present-day USec is the culmination can only be found in the revisionist program and method of Pabloism -- which organisationally destroyed the Fourth International in 1951-53 -- on such decisive questions as Stalinism, petty-bourgeois nationalism/guerrillaism, popular fronts, and the liquidation of the Transitional Program to tail "new vanguards".

The course charted by McCarthy -- as by the RMG leadership in Canada -- has been framed not only by the USec's endorsement of the SWP's "revolutionary" credentials; not only by the Mandelites' caving in under pressure, revealed most recently in the shocking capitulation of the Spanish Mandelites (see adjacent page) which recalls the political collapse of Andres Nin and the disastrous treachery of his POUM forty years earlier; but also by the CL's own constant opportunist capitulations. There is no middle road between reform and revolution. McCarthy and the RMG leadership have chosen the former. Those intent on proletarian revolution must look to the international Spartacist tendency. ■

RMG: end of the road

At a plenum over New Year's weekend, the Central Committee of the Revolutionary Marxist Group (RMG) resolved to call for a fusion with the League for Socialist Action (LSA). According to an RMG Political Committee statement printed in the 26 January *Old Mole*, the resolution of the RMG CC was made both "unanimously" and "unequivocally".

Thus the centrist RMG nears the end of its three-and-a-half year existence. The decision to reunite with the cravenly reformist LSA (from which the RMG issued as a left split in 1973) reflects both the organization's extreme rightward degeneration and its all-pervasive failure and demoralization.

In 1973, the RMG's leading bodies could pass ("unanimously" and "unequivocally") resolutions condemning the LSA as reformist. Without the secondary cadre and youth activists which the RMG took out of the LSA, the latter was supposed to collapse like a house of cards. Meanwhile, the RMG would triple or quadruple its size within two years.

Instead, the RMG was to lose most of its ex-LSA founding cadre during the subsequent two-year period. Following a series of left splits (most importantly, the expulsion of the Bolshevik-Leninist Tendency in March 1975) which led to the formation of the Trotskyist League, the RMG was compelled to note that affairs stood rather differently than in the heady, left-leaning days of late 1973. "It must be added that in English Canada, the political differences between the LSA and RMG are not at all clear in front of the left", sighed an internal document in August 1976.

Accordingly, the RMG leadership has resolved to pull its organization out of the moleholes and back into the social-democratic, pro-NDP [New Democratic Party -- similar to the ALP] "Trotskyism" of the LSA. However, laments the leadership in the *Old Mole* statement, "the position of the Central Committee is not yet a position of the RMG as a whole".

The Central Committee -- which is composed overwhelmingly of ex-NDPers and New Leftists who were not part of the formative 1972-73 faction fight -- is apparently concerned that the RMG membership might not so willingly swallow a perspective of organizational liquidation back into the LSA. Opposition to the projected fusion is reported to be widespread, particularly in the Vancouver local. In Vancouver, a workerist RMG branch has had a great deal of unpleasant first-hand experience with the right-wing politics of the LSA, which uncritically supports a gang of mainstream right social democrats in the [British Columbia] NDP "Open Caucus".

For years, the LSA has made the call to "win the NDP to socialism" the centerpiece of its program. One of the better aspects of the Revolutionary Communist Tendency's (RCT -- the RMG's precursor inside the LSA) factional struggle was its rejection of the majority's "unconditional support" for social democracy.

Particularly valuable was its documentation of the LSA's intervention into the NDP Waffle caucus. For the most part, the LSA differentiated itself from the Waffle's social-democratic

leadership from the right -- by urging the group never to split from the NDP, but to "stay and fight". On one occasion, the LSA majority -- hand-in-glove with David Lewis and Jim Laxer -- went so far as to *smash* the leftist New Brunswick LSA operation, because the positions it had won the local NDP to were too left-wing (documented in [LSA] Discussion Bulletin no 26, January 1973).

Comments about the need to fight within the NDP for vague "socialist policies" have dotted recent issues of the *Old Mole* -- testifying to the willingness of the RMG to readopt the LSA's bankrupt NDP line. Thus the RMG seeks to eliminate the final substantive difference on domestic policy which separates the two organizations, in order to cement the fusion...

Pressure from Ernest Mandel and the rest of the USec majority leadership has undoubtedly played a major role in the RMG's decision to re-embrace the LSA (three international USec majority leaders were reportedly present at the New Year's plenum). However, the key factor permitting an RMG-LSA reunification has been the former's own rapid rightward degeneration -- from left-centrism, to right-centrism, to the brink of reformism.

The ex-NDPers who run the RMG have no continuity with the left-centrist RCT forces which split the LSA in 1973, and thus are quite prepared to capitulate to the reformist LSA of today. The Quebec Groupe Marxiste Revolutionnaire (GMR), however, is still led by the same group of hard-line Pabloists (centered on Michel Mill) who waged a long and very bitter factional struggle against the LSA's Quebec wing (the LSO) in the 1960s and early 1970s. While the GMR has also expressed a willingness to participate in the fusion with the LSA/LSO, it is unlikely that Mill and company would go along with a fusion unless they retained control over the USec's Quebec operation (despite being in a "united" organization). Thus, in a completed trade-off, RMGers would swallow the "win the NDP to socialism" line and the LSA would run the USec's English-Canadian work, while the Mill wing would have bundist "autonomy" to run Quebec.

Such unprincipled combinationism and scotch-tape "unity" between reformists and centrists is the stock-in-trade of the USec. But four years ago, the RCT rejected just such "unity" with the ultra-reformist LSA when it split to form the RMG.

"Comrades", wrote future RMG leaders Bret Smiley and Walter Davis in 1973, "Luxemburg and Liebknecht did not die at the hands of the social democrats so that we would give 'unconditional support' to the political grandchildren of their executioners" ("Social Democracy and the LSA", Discussion Bulletin no 29, February 1973). As the RCT partially understood, the LSA is a venal and bureaucratic reformist organization, having more in common programmatically with Scheidemann and Noske than with the great German revolutionaries. The RMG is welcome to its new-found home. We, however, pledge to continue the struggle to reforge the Trotskyist Fourth International, in order to defeat the working-class misleaders and lead the international proletariat to victory. ■ (abridged from *Spartacist Canada* no 13, February 1977)

REVOLUTIONARY TROTSKYIST BULLETIN No 1 (parts 1 and 2)

TROTSKYISM vs CENTRISM

The struggle of the Bolshevik-Leninist Tendency in the Revolutionary Marxist Group

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Fake-Trotskyists embrace Francoist "democracy"

Rightist terror in Spain



Funeral procession in Madrid, 23 January, for leftist lawyers murdered by right-wing gunmen. Workers' outrage must be channelled into struggle for state power.

In the 15 months since the death of Generalissimo Franco, Spain has been convulsed by tempestuous and escalating social struggles which threaten not only the stinking remnants of the Francoist regime but the rule of capital itself. As the intensity of the class struggle has mounted so have the terrorist activities of the multitude of officially protected fascist bands and ultra-rightist death squads.

On 24 January two right-wing gunmen burst in through the door of an apartment building office on Madrid's Antocha Street and blazed away with their machine guns. Five leftist lawyers were killed instantly and four more were seriously wounded. As news of this cold-blooded murder spread through Madrid and reverberated throughout Spain it provoked an immediate and massive outpouring of anger.

In the capital the working class gave its response in the streets. Over 200,000 people marched in a funeral procession for three of the slain leftists, members of the Communist Party (PCE). Periodically there would be bitter cries of "assassins!" and the crowds would strike up the "Internationale", but PCE marshals would

also kidnaped by the "GRAPO". But on 14 February Spanish police reported that in a series of raids on reputed GRAPO hide-outs in Madrid they had released Oriol and Villaescusa and arrested 26 suspects including four purported GRAPO leaders.

The current crisis in Spain poses fundamental tests to all those who speak in the name of the working class. If the Antocha murders showed the mortal danger of fascist terrorists who would drown the left in a sea of blood, the angry response by hundreds of thousands of protesters demonstrates the tremendous combativity of the Spanish proletariat.

The Stalinists and social democrats joined Francoist prime minister Suarez in calling on the working people to remain "serene" -- ie to allow fascist butchers and their police protectors to command the streets. This is only the continuation of their treacherous popular-front policy during the civil war when the reformists paved the way to Franco's victory by tying the masses to "republican [ie bourgeois] legality".

Who, then, will lead the proletariat to crush

section of the fake-Trotskyist "United Secretariat" (Usec) led by Ernest Mandel -- condemned the killing of three policemen in Madrid (claimed by the mysterious "GRAPO") as well as the arrests of numerous members of opposition groups, and demanded from the government "immediate action against ... the fascist and para-police organizations".

What fools! They are calling on the Guardia Civil to repress the clerical-fascist terrorists, many of whom are simply the same Guardia Civil out of uniform! And the state has "answered" their call, by declaring an emergency for the avowed purpose of suppressing the terrorists. Of course, under the cover of this decree what has occurred is a massive crackdown against the left. Here is the point where reformist illusions in the "neutrality" of the bourgeois state become positively suicidal. Marxists call instead for the organisation of workers militias to defend the workers movement and to crush the reactionary gunmen.

But there is more: the document affirms that the "reestablishment of all democratic and national rights, notably that of unrestricted amnesty, would allow advance in a climate of democratic tolerance"; and it ends with a call for "unity and responsibility of all people in the framework of this democratic statement". What we have here is the cornerstone of the Spanish Communist Party's call for a "negotiated breakthrough" -- a pact with the government to achieve a peaceful transition from bonapartist dictatorship to bourgeois democracy!

We find among the signatories to this popular-frontist declaration not only the Republican Esquerra, the Carlists and the Assembly of Catalonia -- all bourgeois formations -- but also most of the "extreme left", from the Maoist/syndicalists to the Liga Comunista Revolucionaria (LCR -- a Spanish sympathising section of the Usec). This is indeed a "chastening" of the once ferociously guerrillaist LCR. Gone are the days when it gave "total" support to the Basque nationalist bomb assassination of Prime Minister Carrero Blanco. Gone, too, are the days when LCR's single crowning demand was the mythical "HGR" -- the Revolutionary General Strike which would explode one day with the sole demand of overthrowing the Franco regime.

But the Spanish Mandelites did not stop at giving up their terrorist/spontaneist myths. They went on to adopt the most wretched aspects of the legalistic reformism of their opponents inside the Usec. Who among those that have followed the interminable squabbling in the "United" Secretariat does not remember the vehemence and scorn with which the Mandel-led majority condemned the Argentine PST for pledging support to the "institutionalisation" of the murderous Peronist regime?! Now the majority follows suit.

The Barcelona communique proves once again the complete inability of these revisionists and renegades from Trotskyism to withstand the tests of turbulent class struggles. The LCR's snivelling capitulation at the first provocation is a carbon copy of the PST's bowing and scraping before Peron. This pitiful declaration, like the Portuguese LCI's 1975 signature of the popular-frontist "Revolutionary United Front" (FUR) statement supporting the Armed Forces Movement, proves once again the urgency of the struggle for the reorganising of the Fourth International. Only through constructing sections of the international Spartacist tendency in Portugal and Spain can the banner of revolutionary Trotskyism be raised and the Iberian proletariat unite behind a Leninist leadership. ■

(adapted from Workers Vanguard no 143, 4 February 1977)

Infamous Barcelona communique

The undersigned parties:

First, condemn the attacks which resulted in the deaths of three policemen (in Madrid on January 28).

Second, consider that the measures decreed by the Council of Ministers do not contribute to the regulation of the present situation.

Third, energetically condemn the arbitrary detentions of numerous members of democratic parties and the violent raids upon their homes. They reaffirm their democratic will and that they bear no responsibility for the Madrid attacks.

Fourth, as a result they demand:

- a) the immediate freeing of democratic militants who have been detained and a halt to the utilization of arbitrary measures;
- b) immediate action against the real culprits in the

present situation, i.e., the fascist and para-police organizations.

Fifth, reaffirm that only the reestablishment of all democratic and national rights, notably that of unrestricted amnesty, would allow advance in a climate of democratic tolerance. With these goals in view, they demand the firmest unity and responsibility of all people in the framework of this democratic statement and condemnation of all the murders committed.

(Signed)

Partido del Trabajo (Comite de Catalunya), Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya, Frente Nacional de Catalunya, Asambleo de Catalunya, Liga Comunista Revolucionaria, Movimiento Comunista de Catalunya, Organizacion Revolucionaria de los Trabajadores, Partido Carlista, Partido Comunista de Espana (Marxista-Leninista), Organizacion Comunista de Espana (BR), Partido Comunista (Unitario)

-- Rouge, 30 January 1977

quickly enforce silence. Barcelona was paralysed as 200,000 workers went on strike, including a sit-down strike that took over the giant SEAT auto plant.

The Antocha attack was universally understood as a provocation by Francoist ultras to force military intervention against what they perceive to be the government's drift into the arms of "godless Communism". It came only half a day after the kidnapping of General Emilio Villaescusa, the head of the Supreme Council of Military Justice and a reputed "Bunker" hard-liner within the army. Credit for the kidnapping was claimed by an obscure terrorist group, the GRAPO ("First of October Anti-Fascist Resistance Group"), which claims to be leftist. However, left groups disclaim any knowledge of the GRAPO and many insist that it is merely a cover for fascist provocateurs bent on carrying out a "strategy of tension".

Immediately following the killings there were comparisons to 1936 and widespread talk of an "Argentinisation" of Spain. The clerical-fascist gunmen who carried out the Antocha massacre styled themselves the Anti-Communist Apostolic Alliance (AAA -- recalling the notorious Argentine death squads); they threatened to unleash a "night of the long knives" to wipe out the left should anything happen to Villaescusa or to Antonio Mario Oriol (the president of the state council and a close friend of King Juan Carlos),

the blue-shirted Falangist thugs and fascist gunmen, by overthrowing the capitalist state which nurtures and protects them? The crisis of revolutionary leadership is posed point-blank in Spain today.

In the tension-filled days following the Antocha murders the regime declared a one-month "emergency", banned all public rallies and arrested upwards of 200 leftists in Madrid alone. The detentions have reportedly fallen heavily on Maoist and syndicalist groups. The response of authentic communists must be to mobilise the workers in militant action -- especially in the factories, where their strength as a class is concentrated -- to demand the rightist repression be halted and the left-wingers arrested in the police raids be immediately released.

However, in an act that is simultaneously a betrayal of the working class, lethal idiocy and an example of reformist cowardice, the Spanish "extreme left" has sought the "protection" of bourgeois liberals and of the Francoist state itself! While the dominant Stalinists and social democrats signed a joint appeal for calm with the head of the government, their "left" camp followers issued a joint communique in Barcelona that totally embraces reformist illusions of Francoist "democracy" through self-reform of the bloody dictatorship.

The press statement -- which was reprinted without comment in Rouge, the organ of the French

The fight against apartheid:

Labour solidarity, not phony "total" boycotts

In the nine months since the black township of Soweto exploded in an elemental burst of outrage directed against the barbaric apartheid system, a wave of black and "coloured" (mixed race) uprisings have swept South Africa. The response of the white-supremacist Vorster regime has been a few token concessions and massive ruthless repression -- at least 400 non-whites massacred (according to the government's own fraudulently low figures) and thousands more arrested.

We reprint below excerpts from a leaflet issued by class-struggle oppositionists in the International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union (ILWU -- covering watersiders and storemen on the West Coast of the US) around the newsletter *Longshore-Warehouse Militant*, politically supported by the Spartacist League/US (SL/US). The leaflet (first reprinted in *Workers Vanguard* no 142, 28 January) called for the ILWU to actively implement an international call for coordinated industrial action in defence of 24 victimised South African labour activists. It also denounced the avowedly "progressive" ILWU bureaucracy led by Stalinist fellow-traveller Harry Bridges for ignoring the ILWU Local 10 membership's vote in favour of the boycott and sabotaging the ban with its do-nothing policies. For example, when the Nedlloyd Kimberley, a ship carrying South African goods docked in San Francisco harbour, militant unionists, members of the SL/US and other anti-apartheid activists demonstrated to protest against any handling of the ship's cargo. The Bridges bureaucracy nevertheless ordered the wharfies to work the ship, which makes a regular run to South Africa, for all non-South African cargo.

Despite the ACTU's nominal support the week of 17 January passed by in Australia with scarcely a mention of the ban in either the bourgeois or labour press. Here too the Stalinist and social-democratic labour traitors substitute bluster about a total trade and cultural boycott of South Africa for the necessary campaign of concrete industrial action.

Trailing right behind the bureaucrats and their liberal strategy are the pseudo-Trotskyist Socialist Workers Party (SWP) and Communist League (CL), who cohabit the Pabloist "United"



Demonstrators protest against unloading of South African ship at San Francisco pier, 18 January.

Secretariat. At a meeting in Sydney called by the SWP-influenced No Ties With Apartheid Campaign Committee to plan a 21 March demonstration on the anniversary of the 1960 Sharpeville massacre in which 69 South African blacks were gunned down by police, the centrist CL expressed little hesitancy in uniting around the SWP's reformist platform. This included the bourgeois-nationalist demand for "black majority rule", ie a black capitalist state, and the classless demand to "Free all South African political prisoners", rejecting the SL's demand to free all victims of apartheid repression. Attempting to dissociate itself from the SWP's pulpy liberalism, the CL managed to amend the SWP's "end apartheid" to read "smash apartheid" and to add the SL's call to enforce black trade-union rights through international industrial action -- of course, leaving the liberal thrust of the SWP's proposal completely unchanged.

One CLer, acting as hatchetman for the SWP, cynically charged that the SL's call for an in-

ternational industrial ban on military shipments to the murderous police state was "utopian". But he failed to explain how a *union* ban on *military* goods was utopian whereas a plea for the international bourgeoisie to stop *all* aid and trade was not!

As the ILWU militants point out total permanent boycotts are reactionary in their outcome as well as utopian in their intent. Insofar as they are realised -- generally over issues which do not materially affect the Afrikaaner bourgeoisie -- they actually impede the cultural and economic links which facilitate concrete measures of solidarity. Thus black actors John Kani and Winston Ntshona were arrested by the South African government for the very blow against apartheid for which they had been condemned by the liberal nationalist, Stalinist-led African National Congress -- they defiantly performed, in their play "Sizwe Bansi is Dead", a moving dramatic statement against apartheid and the bantustan system before black audiences in the Transkei bantustan itself. Would the oppressed Transkeian masses have been better equipped in the struggle against apartheid if these courageous artists had in fact "respected" the ANC's appeal for a "complete, total economic, athletic, cultural boycott of South Africa"?

No! Nor will the interests of the black masses be served by begging Australian and American bosses to police their Afrikaaner cohorts. It is the *proletarian* internationalism of these ILWU militants which points the way forward.

* * * * *

The International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) has called for a worldwide week of trade union action to protest the vicious apartheid regime in South Africa, beginning today, [January] 17. The specific purpose of this international action is to focus opposition against the banning [sharp curtailing of rights] or arresting of 24 black and white trade unionists for their activities in organizing black workers into trade unions. The [South African] government is determined to smash all attempts to expand black trade union organizations. It fears the power of the black working class which has engaged in a series of courageous spontaneous general strikes to defend black and "coloured" youth fighting apartheid. The murderous regime is acting with particular vengeance against these 24 activists -- most of whom are white -- because these initial acts of interracial class solidarity challenge the very purpose of the racist apartheid system. To defend these courageous unionists, the ICFTU is calling on all labor organizations "to take the strongest possible measures" and specifically for "the grounding of South African aircraft and ships, as well as a boycott on the unloading and loading of goods destined for or coming from South Africa"... While the call does not include the freeing of *all* victims of the racist regime the ILWU must actively join the boycott.... To ensure effective action, a strike committee elected from all boards, gangs, etc must organize the boycott and send delegations up and down the coast to stop South African cargo....

The class collaborationist misleaders of the World Federation of Trade Unions [WFTU] and the various Communist Parties [CPs] seem to be only nominally supporting the ICFTU call, de-emphasizing the industrial action aspect in favor of an open-ended economic boycott of all South African products. In the US, this week's *People's World* [West Coast weekly of the CP] does not even mention the boycott call and none of the Communist Party sympathizers in either longshore or warehouse have done anything to mobilize the union. The CPs and WFTU are always eager to prevent working class struggle in order to preserve the illusory "detente" between the USSR and US imperialism.

The ICFTU and WFTU demand for a total economic boycott of South Africa is primarily only a token "moral" position, which by avoiding specific industrial action by organized labor will not upset the ruling classes of the industrial world. However it is also a *dangerous* proposal. In the unlikely event that it should become effective, causing a serious cutback in South African foreign trade, the result would be widespread unemployment among the black workers and the resultant weakening of the capacity of the workers to struggle. With the exception of standing boycotts of all arms shipments to the

racist regimes, boycotts should in general be limited to strikes, hot cargoing [black banning] and other labor action organized to back up specific demands and concretely demonstrate international labor solidarity with the victims of apartheid terror. Furthermore, if the WFTU and ICFTU were really interested in aiding our black South African brothers they would initiate industrial action against companies with South African subsidiaries, demanding to force them to recognize black unions. Workers at the British Leyland auto works have already made such a demand.

South Africa is the most heavily industrialized country on the continent. From 1973 to 1975 a mass strike wave swept the country, uniting black and Indian workers for the first time. The government is determined to crush any acts of solidarity by white workers towards blacks since such acts open the possibility of class struggle across color lines which would not only smash apartheid but open the road towards a workers government. Establishment of a workers government through the expropriation of all major industry, mines and banks would mean the elimination of the major bastion of imperialism on the African continent. A workers government would have a profound influence on all African liberation movements which until now have been led by petty bourgeois nationalists. While they have struggled for national independence, their goal is black capitalism. A workers government in South Africa would inspire workers from Angola to Zambia to Mozambique to sweep aside their petty exploiters and establish working class rule throughout the continent.

As an important act of international working class solidarity, the ILWU and all labor must act decisively to defeat the banning of the 24 trade unionists and to win freedom for all anti-apartheid fighters held in Vorster's jails. This week's boycott must be made 100% effective worldwide and a permanent boycott must be imposed against all military arms shipments to the racist regime. ■

Sri Lanka . . .

Continued from page three

The government also took note that the unions and federations under other leaderships -- Bala Tampoe, Thondaman, Shanmugadasan (CP-Peking) and others -- would not go beyond giving lip-service to this strike movement.

Of course, the "revolutionary leader" of the Ceylon Mercantile Union (Tampoe), Thondaman and the rest did something in this regard. Through their coordinating committee, the TUCC (Trade Union Coordinating Committee) these leaders wrote a letter to the prime minister! In this letter, these leaders called upon the "government to settle the strike democratically"!

It was in this context, that the government decided to break the strike.

On January 4, the government clamped on the "essential services order" by which the strikes became illegal. It is true that the workers on strike defied this order. But the leaderships of the striking unions did nothing to mobilise the strikers and other sections of the workers not involved in the strike to meet the government repression that had begun. While the CP was in the coalition alliance and was giving Sirima Bandaranaike full support to launch repression (thus making it part of the forces of repression), the LSSP which was reputed to be in "the opposition" totally failed to do anything to counter governmental measures to break the strike.

Taking account of the green light given by the trade-union leaders, by the LSSP and all other trade-union leaderships not in the strike, the government took the necessary follow-up actions. Thus on January 6 the government refused to allow the use of loudspeakers for the rally of the LSSP-led federations in support of the strikes. The LSSP leaders meekly conformed to police orders, and their workers rally was virtually disrupted without the use of loudspeakers.

Other repressive measures followed swiftly. Following cabinet directions the police drove out strikers when they gathered, even in small groups, in the vicinity of strikebound places. Police also arrested hundreds of strikers even in private premises if these places were close to the workplaces where strikes had occurred.

In order to expedite the disruption of the railway and "bus" workers strike, the police visited the homes of strikers who were dragged out and compelled at bayonet-point to resume work under the supervision of the armed forces personnel.

When the government said that its repression was being carried out according to plan, and that the trade-union leaders were not ready for any counter-measures through the mobilisation of the workers, it hastened to give the "coup de

grace" to the strike by finally clamping a press censorship of all news regarding the strike.

It was obvious to the strikers that under these conditions, their strike movement could not continue. About January 15 the strikers, who had shown great courage and determination in regard to their struggle, understood that the wisest course of action was to end the strike. The leaders of the trade unions who had played a treacherous role, including the leaders of the LSSP-led unions, were relieved that the strikers were ready to have the strikes called off. These leaders could well say that the strikers were not ready to continue their strikes, and that it was not they who called off the strikes, but the workers themselves!

Thus a powerful government workers' strike movement which could well have been developed into a general strike against the capitalist SLFP-CP government and the capitalist class, was broken up without the workers winning any of their demands, by the unprecedented repression of the SLFP-CP regime, the treachery of the SLFP-CP trade union leaders and the virtual abandonment of the strikes by the LSSP.

If indeed even a section of the working class has understood that what basically led to the collapse of the strike movement was the treachery and the do-nothing policy of their reformist leaders, then it could well be said that the working class has made important gains in this strike. This would mean that the unpostponable task of driving out their reformist leaders and the forging of the new revolutionary leadership has already been sharply posed for the workers of Sri Lanka. ■

(reprinted from *Workers Vanguard* no 143, 4 February 1977)

Penal powers . . .

Continued from page one

resent a "strategy" akin to suicide. This legislation is symptomatic of the absolutely unavoidable tendency of the bourgeois state, in the period of capitalist decline, to strangle the independence of the unions -- to turn them from weapons of workers' struggle into policemen of the class.

Influential elements of the ruling class have been increasingly open in demanding that Fraser move toward a decisive confrontation with the unions. RG Fry, the national director of the Metal Trades Industry Association, put it succinctly for the ruling class: "Strikes are a luxury Australia cannot afford in the fight against inflation" (*Australian*, 9 February).

In the face of this impatience the traditional state mechanism for controlling the class struggle and disciplining the unions, the Conciliation and Arbitration Commission, is increasingly inadequate in its present form to suit the needs of the bourgeoisie. Ever since the near-general strike over the 1969 jailing of Clarrie O'Shea for non-payment of an Industrial Court fine, the penal provisions of the Arbitration Act have not been an effective weapon against the trade unions. No union has paid a fine imposed after 1969, and the court has not attempted to collect any.

With the penal provisions paralysed individual employers have been hesitant to initiate actions in the Industrial Court which could lead to industrial action against them. Thus a primary motivation for the establishment of the IRB and the increased range of offences and penalties is to take the heat off the individual employers and to re-activate and extend the penal provisions of the arbitration system. An arbitration system without the capacity to police the working class -- such as that provided by penal powers -- is no arbitration system at all.

The IRB legislation comes at a time when Fraser is seeking to pressure the Arbitration Commission into becoming a more direct agency of L/NCP government economic policy, especially in the wages arena. The government's urgent objective in the current recession is to increase the rate of exploitation of the proletariat. Thus it wants to prepare the commission to repeat its role in the Great Depression, when it imposed a 10 percent across the board pay cut. To date, the commission has resisted government pressure for a clamp on all pay increases by arguing the importance of modulating the "climate" of industrial unrest through use of its wage-fixing powers. A too open acceptance of Fraser's ukase might explode the myth of judicial "independence" which surrounds it and drive the unions out of its compulsory guardianship in favour of collective bargaining.

There is little likelihood of this at present ... if the union officials have their way. The entire labour bureaucracy is enmeshed in the arbitration system and has traditionally relied on it as a mechanism for defusing militant struggle by pointing to usually illusory arbitrated "improvements" in wages and conditions. The "independence" of even the most militant-

talking union officials is confined mostly to over-award struggles in periods of economic upturn. Thus the metal trades bureaucrats who have on occasion verbally denounced the system proclaiming that "workers can expect no justice from the bosses' courts" have sought shelter from the recession by embracing ... the bosses' courts! There has been no national metal trades union campaign for two years! Unlike the labour bureaucracy whose reliance on the arbitration system is but a reflection of their adaptation to capitalism and its state power, class-struggle militants strive, first of all, for the complete and unconditional independence of the trade unions from the bourgeois state.

The union misleaders and their colleagues on the Labor opposition benches hope to channel working-class resistance to Fraser into a bid by Whitlam and company to get back in government. In fact Whitlam promises nothing but to slash living standards without having to resort to the massive repression Fraser proposes. The ALP's sister party in Britain came to power on a wave of opposition to Tory union-bashing in 1973-74, only to see Labour prime minister Wilson launch a campaign to force workers into submitting to massive unemployment and plummeting real wages under the guise of the notorious "social contract".

But even a "left" parliamentary Labor government administering the capitalist state can do nothing fundamental to advance workers' interests, and can at best only end up by paving the way for repression. As the current economic collapse demonstrates, capitalism is bankrupt. The struggle to defend jobs and living standards cannot succeed unless it becomes a struggle for a real workers government to expropriate the capitalist class. Any genuine fight against Fraser is first and foremost a political struggle to oust the reformist misleadership of the labour movement which is totally committed to the preservation of private property, and to replace it with a leadership committed to a full program of class struggle to smash capitalism. ■

Feminism . . .

Continued from page eight

against the reactionary dead-end myth that feminism -- be it spiritualist, separatist, "socialist" or workerist -- can offer women an avenue to social and political emancipation.

Yet the manifest bankruptcy of the WLM's present course has begun to raise the possibility of genuine political struggle and re-orientation. Though the decision was eventually sabotaged in order to force through the classless crawl for sisterhood outlined above, an 18 January IWD planning meeting in Sydney overwhelmingly accepted a Spartacist proposal for a genuine united-front demonstration around concrete *class-struggle* demands addressing the immediate issues facing working-class women and the working class as a whole. Instead of the hackneyed "sisters unite" rhetoric that serves only to paper over political differences the proposal called for an open speakers' platform where the differences confronting the women's movement could be openly raised and debated; and it included demands for: "Jobs for all through shortening the workweek with no loss in pay! Free abortion on demand! Free 24-hour child care! Free quality health care for all! Reverse the cutbacks!"

Despite their professed differences the CPA and SWP readily joined together in defeating this attempt to return IWD to its class-struggle heritage. The CPA dropped its usual opposition to the SWP's liberal demand to "repeal all abortion laws" and the two mobilised their supporters, members of the SWP-front Women's Abortion Action Coalition (WAAC) and other feminists in a rotten bloc to pack the following week's meeting and turn the vote around. That the political distance separating WAAC from the openly bourgeois WEL is short indeed was illustrated by a WAAC member's insistence at the previous week's meeting that the call for free abortion on demand must be opposed because it might alienate MPs who were about to consider bills repealing anti-abortion laws. The SWP accepted free abortion in the end but made sure to vitiate its thrust by stating that it can be won only through a fight for repeal, ie legal reform. In fact many of the demands advanced by the SL were incorporated by the reformists into their proposal and cynically perverted into a reformist/feminist program through long "explanatory" statements and explicitly classless appeals to "all women".

The SWP and CPA thus demonstrated once again that they bear the major responsibility for the cynical demoralisation and personalist escapes from social struggle which beset the radical women's movement. In tailoring their specific brands of reformist revisionism to adapt to feminist false consciousness, they have promoted the illusion that a movement of women organised solely around their felt oppression has the

social power necessary to vanquish that oppression; that women's liberation could be achieved through a series of reforms; that revolutionary working-class men have less social interest in struggling against women's oppression than do bourgeois women. The feminist ideology pushed by these reformists stands in contradiction to their stated aim of destroying capitalism -- as does their class-collaborationist practice in every other arena of social struggle.

Sexual oppression, though it transcends class divisions, is rooted in class society. Women's oppression under capitalism is inextricably linked to the nuclear family as a social institution necessary for the maintenance of capitalism -- as the agency for reproducing and disciplining the workforce, instilling and transmitting bourgeois social values within the working class and transmitting bourgeois property rights. Women also play a necessary role in satisfying the cyclical employment needs of the capitalist economy for a reserve labour pool. Only by smashing the bourgeois state and expropriating the bourgeoisie -- replacing it by a planned, socialist economy which lays the material basis for dismantling the nuclear family by making "women's work" a collective *social* responsibility -- can woman be freed from the oppression she has suffered throughout class society.

Attempts to mobilise women *as women* -- across class lines -- on a program limited to reforms, no matter how radical, not only leads the struggle against women's oppression into a dead end but actively sabotages it by thwarting the development of a conscious and united proletariat. Feminism and any adaptation to feminism play a reactionary role in the struggle for the emancipation of women.

The fake-Trotskyist Communist League (CL) supported the "class line", as one CL sympathiser termed it, represented by the SL proposal for IWD. But the so-called "Working Women's Charter" advanced by the CL as a "vehicle for taking the fight for women's rights into the working class" (*Militant*, 20 January 1977) simply transplants feminist bourgeois ideology into the working class -- by organising women around their immediate, specific oppression and not the revolutionary program (the most "radical" demand in the charter is for a 35-hour workweek at no loss in pay). In no sense can it aid in mobilising women workers as part of the proletariat in a struggle for state power; it is therefore inherently co-optable by the bureaucrats. In fact, the campaign itself has already been taken over by the CPA! Thus the politics pursued by the CL do not indeed represent a "class line" and are, if anything, potentially more dangerous than the patently middle-class feminism of the SWP.

Working women must be mobilised around the same program as working men -- the Trotskyist Transitional Program. Only this program links the immediate felt needs of the working class and all the oppressed to the struggle for socialism and the eradication of all forms of social oppression through the independent mobilisation of the proletariat. Special organisational forms, linked to the revolutionary party, are crucial vehicles in reaching out to specially oppressed strata of the population. Thus a key aspect of the strategic task of awakening the masses of women from centuries of subjugation is the construction of a non-male-exclusionist communist women's movement, section of a Trotskyist vanguard party. The banner of women's liberation is the banner of the reborn Fourth International! ■

AUS . . .

Continued from page two

The Spartacist League recognises the importance of winning as large a section as possible of the politically volatile student population to the side of the proletariat. However, revolutionary-minded students cannot effectively participate in the struggle to overthrow capitalism and establish socialism through petty student-"union" wheeling and dealing. They can do so only by becoming part of the communist vanguard, as professional revolutionists fighting to construct a Trotskyist party. ■

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"Radical" feminism going nowhere

Fight women's oppression through class struggle!



Sydney IWD march, 1975: only SL has fought for a communist alternative to feminism in women's movement.

Asp Photo

"Once again ... we're taking to the streets" -- thus begins the call for this year's International Women's Day (IWD) march in Sydney. But the forced nostalgia rings hollow amidst the deep-going malaise which permeates the feminist-dominated women's liberation movement (WLM). And the stale promise that women's liberation will come "only" with the "involvement of large numbers of women" no longer sounds very convincing to large numbers of disaffected activists.

Fight exclusionism!

As we go to press, a proposal to expel the Spartacist League was put to the 27 February general meeting of Sydney women's liberation and is to be voted at a special meeting 17 April. The mover, one Margo Moore, a "Marxist"-feminist academic at Sydney University, pointed to the near-successful fight for a class-struggle basis for the Sydney IWD march in order to justify suppressing such politics. This anti-communist exclusion attempt must be combated by all who see the need for open political debate to determine a correct strategy for women's liberation.

The contemporary radical women's movement has been plagued by a lack of direction and recurrent political "identity crises" almost from its inception in the late-sixties New Left. But especially since the 1975 political crisis the Australian women's movement has been gripped by a mood of frustration and despair which is noted and felt from one pole of the movement to the other: from "respectable" bourgeois journalists like Anne Summers to old-time male-baiting feminists like Kathie Gleeson; from the shameless reformist operators of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) and Communist Party of Australia (CPA) to the academic "Marxists" at Sydney University.

Two incidents last July captured that mood. A general meeting of Melbourne WLM voted -- though it subsequently reversed itself -- to disband entirely. Around the same time in Sydney a CPA-initiated conference to discuss the way forward for WLM attracted less than a hundred confused and demoralised feminists. Of the few workshops held at the conference, it was the one devoted to "spiritualism" that attracted the greatest number of participants; and much of the "political" discussion during the plenary was devoted to an anti-political red-baiting tirade against the Spartacist League (SL). Not infrequently have the CPA reformists encouraged such attacks on the SL precisely to stifle genuine political debate, but even CPAer Joyce Stevens felt compelled to argue for a more political approach to the problems confronting WLM -- because the rampant apoliticism raised the prospect of a complete disintegration of the movement.

In a recent article Anne Summers concluded that the latest "reassessment" in the "direction of the movement" stems from the cutback in funding to women's centres (*National Times*, 10-15 January). The health centres, women's refuges and rape crisis centres were set up and sustained largely through substantial grants doled out by the Whitlam Labor government during International Women's Year. *With the money gone* the activists who staffed the centres in the hope of reaching out to their apolitical sisters have come to realise that they politicised nobody.

Alluding to the mythical power of the "autonomous" women's movement Summers asserts of the centres that "women made them happen" and through that fight "unified" and "galvanised" a movement which was able to survive long after its American sister had been "torn asunder" by splits and tensions. On the contrary, the relative longevity of the Australian movement stemmed from the fact that *its* reformism was more successful -- in the short term. The centres were maintained at the sufferance of a "male-dominated" social-democratic government which, in a period of relative prosperity, was prepared to buy off the feminist movement. Not surprisingly, when Fraser sharply escalated the cutbacks already begun under Whitlam the "unified", "galvanised" movement did little to mobilise for the centres' defence.

Summers predicts that the women's movement is now headed "back to the barricades" -- not *street* "barricades", mind you, but a less-than-

insurrectionary "storming" of the chambers of Parliament by lobbyists and "women's affairs advisors" like Liz Reid and Penny Ryan to regain through parliamentary "struggle" what was lost by the sacking of Whitlam.

Many WLM activists instinctively recoil at the prospect of pursuing the staid parliamentary pressure politics of the Women's Electoral Lobby (WEL) or identifying with the likes of Liz Reid, who left the social-democratic Whitlam to gain employ with the murderous Shah of Iran. But Summers is not alone. In a debate initiated in the Melbourne WLM following last July's vote to self-destruct, veteran feminist Kathie Gleeson pondered whether "we are right in completely rubbishing the efforts" of women working within the "inner circles" of parliamentary parties ("The Political is Personal" -- undated).

The contradictions of feminism which were brought out in sharp relief during the political crisis of November 1975 laid the basis for the severe disorientation evident today. While feminist logic dictated a hands-off attitude to all "male-dominated" parties and politics the feminist journal *Mabel* (December 1975), which was initiated at the time, openly mobilised "Women for Labor" in an electoral campaign to avert the "fate worse than death of a Liberal Government". Beyond their immediate desire to save the government which had granted their centres, many radical feminists -- with roots in the left -- were impelled by an instinctive solidarity against an attack from the right. But aside from their painted faces and purple flags, the radicals -- with their slogan "Vote Labor, fight for women's rights" -- were virtually indistinguishable from the despised WEL. Feminism, no matter how "radical", could advance no independent axis of struggle.

The predicament which confronts the feminist movement is that the alternatives have all been tried and all have failed. A return to self-help centres offers little hope; and pressuring Parliament is scarcely more promising than the dissipation and demoralisation the movement is undergoing in the trend toward personalism. Yet the debate over new directions is an exercise in self-deception.

A real political debate on the problems confronting the women's movement would bring into question feminism itself. Thus it was none other than Gleeson who engineered the expulsion of the SL from Melbourne WLM for raising its politics in a previous debate on the direction of the movement *three years ago*. Nor is it surprising that they chose to attack the SL -- as have other feminists. For only the SL has consistently denied and politically struggled

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International Women's Day

Spartacist forums

MELBOURNE

Speaker:
Marie Hotschilt

Function room 2
Union building
LaTrobe University
1.00 pm
Wednesday -- 9 March

SYDNEY

Speaker:
Naoli Carlson

Latin room 2
Main Quadrangle
Sydney University
1.00 pm
Thursday -- 10 March



Garment workers during 1919 strike.

"There is only one movement; there is only one organization of women communists within the Communist Party, together with male communists. The tasks and goals of the communists are our tasks, our goals. No autonomous organization, no doing your own thing which in any way lends itself to splitting the revolutionary forces and diverting them from their great goals of the conquest of political power by the proletariat and the construction of communist society."

-- Clara Zetkin, 1921