

## LIBERALS ANXIOUS AS NIXON CREDIBILITY SHAKEN

# Watergate Exposes Capitalist "Democracy"

For the past two months the liberal press has been piously prating about the Watergate affair revealing "a corrupt style of government which is profoundly subversive of this country's institutions" (*New York Times*, 20 May 1973). The whole scenario is summed up by the recently resurrected 1972 Republican campaign button: "Nixon's the One." In fact, however, the corruption and conspiracy of Watergate go far beyond Nixon and his cronies. Year in and year out, spying, bribery, lying, theft, infiltration, forgery, etc., as well as wholesale buying of influence and selling of principles, have always been the lifeblood of bourgeois politics. Even the "heavy" methods—provocateurs, rigged trials, sabotage—have been used for decades against radicals and the labor movement. (For instance, Sacco and Vanzetti, the Scottsboro boys, the jailing of Socialist Workers Party and Communist Party leaders under the Smith Act.)

The crimes of Watergate pale in comparison to the daily atrocities of the capitalist system (the tens of thousands who die every year as a result of industrial accidents, the hundreds of thousands killed by needless hunger and disease) and the repeated massacres organized by the bourgeoisie to prop up its tottering rule (more than two million Vietnamese workers and peasants murdered by imperialist forces since 1945, the killing of more than half a million Indonesian Communists in 1965), not to mention the unspeakable carnage of two imperialist world wars. Guilty of these crimes are not only Nixon (who, as far as his personal responsibility is concerned, would certainly merit the honor of being the first to receive the death penalty he has been eager to reintroduce), but the entire bourgeoisie which he represents.

While Watergate methods are nothing new in the life of the working class, there is a difference in this case: First, they were used against another bourgeois party. And second, Nixon got caught. In contrast to normal times,

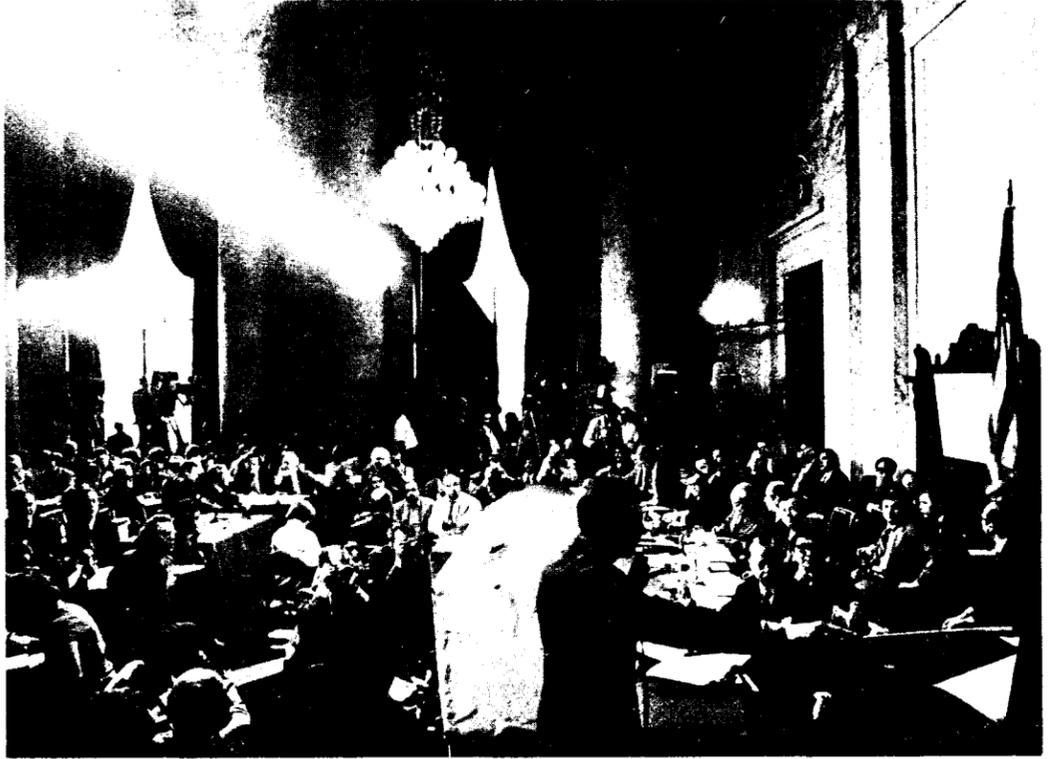
when all this goes on secretly, these two abnormal circumstances have given the public an opportunity to gaze upon the real nature of capitalist politics.

### Just Doing a Job

The actual chain of events reads like a comic opera with one blunder after another. First, ex-CIA agents get caught trying to copy papers in the Democratic Party offices. Then they are immediately linked to the Republican campaign committee. Soon reports appear of a widespread GOP effort to infiltrate rival campaign organizations and put out smear stories

to discredit Democratic candidates. (Part of the plan was a conscious attempt to ensure a McGovern nomination.) Various covers for the operation are debated (e.g., blame it on the CIA and "national security"); then it is decided to let the underlings who got caught take the rap, with guarantees of future favors for their pains.

But there is a fly in the ointment: one of the operatives (McCord) doesn't like the plan to involve the CIA and wants desperately to stay out of jail. Another wrench in the works: key Congressional leaders decide that Nixon has gone off the deep end by his hostile attitude toward the legislature in early 1973 and in retaliation start pushing a Watergate probe. After a drawn out cat-and-mouse game at the trial, McCord decides to get Nixon by talking.



Opening session of Senate Watergate hearings.

NEWSWEEK

Big uproar. Denials all around. Another important Nixon aide (Dean) senses an attempt to make him the scapegoat: more leaked hints in the anti-Nixon press. A loose-lipped incompetent (Gray) running the FBI accidentally lets out some tantalizing clues in Senate hearings. Then lower-level Administration officials start telling what they know, afraid of becoming the scapegoat. Nixon denials. More admissions. Then Nixon admissions and "trust in me!"

As we go to press, the circle has tightened around Nixon's three top domestic aides (Mitchell, Haldeman and Ehrlichman), who have apparently decided to brazen it out, denying all in order to save the President. Meanwhile various leading newspapers and congressmen test the wind on the subject of impeachment but find substantial

fense Intelligence Agency, National Security Agency, etc., and the FBI) were intended to participate in setting up this secret agency. Despite Nixon's claim that the plan was shelved five days after it was implemented, a top-secret inter-agency "Intelligence Evaluation Committee" was established to carry on a wide range of domestic spying. Among other things, it reported almost daily to the Republican National Committee. In the meantime, the White House set up its own private spy task force (informally called "the plumbers"), supposedly to concentrate on intelligence leaks. Among other things, this group illegally tapped at least 14 telephones of administration officials (including enabling Kissinger to spy on his aides in 1969), broke into the offices of the psychiatrist of Daniel Ellsberg (of Pentagon Papers fame) and forged a telegram linking Kennedy to the death of South Vietnamese dictator Diem.

The "IEC" national red squad was also quite active. In the space of two years, it broke into offices of the Black Panthers, the Berrigan brothers' group and the "Chicago Seven," and perhaps others, to get "evidence" and plant wiretaps for the government's frame-up efforts. One of the most frequent activities of the red squad was the planting of provocateurs. Last year, the Vietnam Veterans Against the War were charged with planning to shoot up the Republican Party convention; the indictments were based on the testimony of an FBI plant, William Lemmer, who admitted giving the government information which was "95 percent false." A recent newspaper account tells of another FBI provocateur, Larry Grathwohl, who was a prominent Weatherman: He gave lessons in bomb-making and the use of delayed fuses and, "utilizing a special munition he manufactured—participated in the bombing of a public school in a suburb of Cincinnati"

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## Strike Against Wage Controls! Build a Workers Party!

resistance in more "responsible" quarters.

### "Gestapo Tactics"

Amid the general confusion some important information has come out concerning a 1970 Nixon plan to set up a domestic secret political police apparatus. Published reports speak of a growing ineffectiveness of the FBI under J. Edgar Hoover's last years of rule. According to the plan, all the various intelligence arms (CIA, De-



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# SL Expelled from Chino Defense Committee

On May Day members and supporters of Venceremos, in an unsurprising display of infantile sectarianism and anti-Trotskyism, expelled the Spartacist League from the San Francisco Chino Defense Committee (CDC). The following week a similar "purge" was carried out in the East Bay CDC. Not one charge was brought against the Spartacist League and, in fact, Venceremos was forced to admit that the SL/RCY had functioned in exemplary manner as members of the Committee. The expulsions were motivated by political cowardice alone.

Basing itself on the principle of unconditional defense of the left against bourgeois attack, the Spartacist League last January responded immediately to the call to form a Chino Defense Committee in answer to a witchhunt by the State of California directed against the Venceremos group. The SL has been the only organization to do so. Apart from participating in the CDC meetings, members of the SL/RCY distributed leaflets, sold defense buttons, collected money and organized the only forums to be held on Bay Area campuses. Again basing itself on Leninist principles of the united front, the Spartacist League demanded the following preconditions for its participation: First, the SL fought for the principle of unity in action within the CDC; i.e., literature and activities sponsored by the committee were to be agreed upon by all participating groups, thereby preventing the committee from being opportunistically used by any of the participating organizations. Second, there has to be freedom of criticism for organizations involved. That is, while participating in a common defense, the SL refused to liquidate its politics into those of the defense committee and insisted on the right of all organizations to put forward their politics under their own name. These principles can be summarized by the main slogan of the united front, "march separately, strike together."

In its struggle to codify these principles of freedom of criticism, unity in action, the Spartacist League met immediate resistance from Venceremos members in San Francisco. Weeks prior to the May expulsions, these Maoists argued that there could be no common work with "Trotskyites," and claimed that SL/RCY members were disrupting CDC meetings in San Francisco. In a CDC coordinating committee meeting, the Venceremos charges were shown to be fabrications and slanders, and the "principles of unity" were confirmed. This was particularly embarrassing to Venceremos in that the coordinating committee is

composed entirely of members and friends of Venceremos.

What the principles of unity and autonomy meant in practice is best exemplified by the format of the SL-sponsored CDC forums. A twenty-minute presentation by a CDC representative was strictly limited to facts related to the defense case. This was followed by two ten-minute presentations by members of Venceremos and the Spartacist League. This format was expressly aimed at ensuring the political rights and autonomy of both groups involved. It was precisely this principled united-front approach that was cynically rejected by Venceremos when, in its preparations for a CDC rally, the Spartacist League was denied the right to speak at the rally despite full provisions for Venceremos speakers. And, as might be expected, it was precisely the principle of freedom of criticism which precipitated the expulsions. Venceremos, which liquidates its politics as a matter of course, was appalled that the SL had dared put forward SL politics and criticisms of Venceremos during the forums. Venceremos, they declared, would not send representatives to future forums (so there!). Though they tried their best, they were never quite able to make this political cowardice look like righteous indignation. The expulsion proceedings began at the following meetings of the CDC.

On both sides of the Bay the arguments were identical. "Stalin said that it's unprincipled to work with 'Trots,' we were told. 'To say that you defend an organization without supporting it is opportunist.'" This last argument is in perfect accord with the criminal refusal of Venceremos to defend Angela Davis; it also justifies the refusal of every other group on the left to work in the CDC. Finally, by limiting the Venceremos defense to those who support Venceremos, they ensure the narrowest participation and, therefore, sabotage their own defense efforts. In both the East and West Bay it was admitted that the SL had functioned in a responsible manner, and the expulsions had the explicit character of a political purge.

At present, the CDC is limited to members and friends of Venceremos who, we presume, will carry on under the banner, "Dare to Betray, Dare to Lose," and with a total disregard of principles. For our part, we reaffirm our unconditional defense of Venceremos members under attack by the bourgeois state and call on the Chino Defense Committee to re-establish Leninist norms for a united-front defense effort. ■

## Corrections

In the article, "Workers League Withdraws Debate Challenge" of 27 April 1973, *Workers Vanguard* reported the following:

"Last November Wohlforth told the Buffalo Marxist Collective... that he was 'speaking under protest' and that 'after our discussion any further contact with the SL would mean a break in our relations.' The BMC went on to fuse with the RCY."

While Wohlforth did make these remarks, he withdrew them the next day, telling the BMC that "you can talk to whomever you want," providing Wohlforth was not brought to Buffalo as a subterfuge to debate the Spartacist League. Despite the BMC's insistence on further clarification through a debate, Wohlforth categorically refused any confrontation. Additionally, the discussions were held in August, not in November as the article originally reported.

Following successful discussions with the SL/RCY, the BMC broke off relations with the WL.

In the last issue of *WV* (No. 21, 25 May 1973) an important error of translation was made in the article "Class Struggle Heats Up in France." On page 11, we stated that the OCI-supported "political group" in Renault calls for implementing the demands of the "Common Program," the program of the popular-front Union of the Left. In fact, the call is for implementing the demands of the "Common Platform" of the three trade-union federations. Thus our criticism of the OCI on this point—of calling for the implementation of the popular-front program they rejected three weeks earlier—was inaccurate.

We would like to emphasize, nevertheless, that the government of Pompidou remains fundamentally unstable, and that in such a situation a program limited to trade-union reforms (such as the "Common Platform") is wholly inadequate. A Trotskyist program in the unions today in France must include a perspective of replacing the rule of the parties of capital with a workers government based on a program for socialist revolution.

# Repression Hits German Maoists

The West German government last month took a major step toward outlawing the Maoist movement by a nation-wide raid on the offices and homes of members of the Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands (KPD, the Communist Party of Germany) and the arrest of several KPD leaders. At precisely 6:30 a.m. on 15 May, police in West Berlin, Dortmund, Frankfurt, Munich, Dusseldorf and Bonn began a systematic operation of breaking into scores of apartments in search of "incriminating material." More than 100 police were involved in Berlin alone, and the raid netted "several truckloads" of files and documents, the subscription list of the KPD newspaper *Rote Fahne* and the arrest of Jürgen Horlemann, one of

SÜDDEUTSCHE ZEITUNG



Jürgen Horlemann, arrested KPD leader



Results of police raid on offices of German Maoist group (KPD) last month.

the top leaders of the organization, on the charge of membership in an organization pursuing "punishable aims." The Chief Federal Prosecutor refused to answer questions about the raids, simply confirming that they had taken place.

The raids and arrests came only four days before the visit to West Germany of Russian CP head Leonid Brezhnev, and most newspapers linked the police action to that visit. (The KPD had threatened demonstrations against Brezhnev.) The Deutsche Kommunistische Partei (DKP, the German Communist Party, the far larger pro-Moscow group) had called on the Brandt government to act against the Maoists. According to a report in the Italian newspaper *Corriere della Sera*, "the DKP ended by giving valuable information to the Federal authorities" (cited in *Workers Press*, 18 May 1973). A week earlier the leadership of the Metalworkers' Union (IG Metall) called for the expulsion of members of the Revolutionäre Gewerkschaftsopposition (RGO, the Revolutionary Trade Union Opposition), the KPD's trade-union group, from the union. The Social Democrats, with the aid of the DKP, have called for the expulsion of Trotskyists and Maoists from the German Trade Union Federation (DGB) (*Workers Press*, 10 May 1973).

In spite of the use of Brezhnev's visit as a justification for the police action, it is clearly intended as a first step toward declaring the organization illegal. The Minister of the Interior of the state of North Rhine-Westphalia (including Dortmund, the headquarters of the KPD) had already initiated the process of banning the KPD on 30 April (*Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 16 May 1973). He also declared that there were more than 2,000 members of Maoist, Trotskyist and anarchist groups in his state.

The KPD is a largely student organization, concentrated in Berlin, which

has managed to combine Third Period "ultra-leftist" Stalinism with popular-front policies in a manner that captures the worst aspects of each period. Thus it calls for signing the treaty in Vietnam (thereby endorsing the robbers' peace) and its Liga gegen den Imperialismus (Anti-imperialist League) has no socialist program whatsoever; at the same time, its answer to Thieu's April visit was impotent adventurism (invading the Bonn city hall), and the RGO trade-union groups are clearly oriented toward dual unionism, thus giving the bureaucrats an easy excuse for expelling them (as they are now doing) as members of "a rival labor organization." These Stalinist policies are combined in various blends by all of the Maoist groups, which in Germany include (besides the KPD) the KPD/ML (*Roter Morgen*), the KPD/ML (*Rote Fahne*), various groups entitled Kommunistischer Bund and several student groups. The largest of the organizations, the KPD, has roughly 1,000 members and was able to mobilize

10,000 participants in a demonstration in Berlin last year.

While Trotskyists are totally opposed to the Stalinist reformism of Maoism, we recognize these police actions as an attack on the entire workers movement and therefore call for unconditional defense of the KPD against the bourgeois state. This contrasts sharply to the DKP's encouragement of the state in moving against the Maoists, despite clear indication in the semi-official organ of the German bourgeoisie, the *Frankfurter Allgemeine* (16 May 1973), that the DKP itself should eventually be banned. ■

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# NCLC "Strategy" Conference

## Marcus Raves On

Heroic music set the stage for the fantasy which unfolded last week in the Grand Ballroom of the Hotel Commodore, where Lyn Marcus of the National Caucus of Labor Committees unveiled his (latest) plan for seizing state power within five years.

"We have been accused of being fascists," intoned the moderator, as the last strains of stirring music faded away. He then noted that the fascists had, after all, made the trains run on time and that the NCLC would carry out a revolution within the next few years on an equally precise timetable. These remarks served as prologue to the introduction of Marcus as "the station-master behind it all."

Marcus, despite his unequalled expertise in the production of non-fulfilling prophecies, remains unflappable in stating exact dates for his crackpot schemes, perhaps because, like Tim Wohlforth of the Workers League, he and his organization of petty-bourgeois academics manqués always have available as last line of defense the spurious employment of Marxist contradiction to prove that black is white. Thus "Operation Mop-Up," in which the NCLC, with equal assurance, announced the demise of the Communist Party within six to eight weeks and its own consequent assumption of hegemony on the Left, has been proclaimed successful! Understandably, however, even Marcus preferred not to dwell on this "success" in his address.

Marcus' keynote address dealt primarily with the formation of a new paramilitary revolutionary youth movement which he claims will come into existence by fall and will number in the tens of thousands within one year. Completely superseding the street gangs, this "movement" will recruit ghetto youth on the basis of "pure rage." These youth will, again within a year, be able to debate down academically trained philosophers and economists.

By what miracle will these erstwhile street-fighters be transformed into redoubtable debaters endowed with the full panoply of Marcusite obscurantist weaponry? Marcus explained that abstract philosophical and economic concepts come easily to "complete" gut-level revolutionaries who have grasped what he terms "sensuous reality": Ghetto youth, filled with pure rage, will then be organized through "psychological terror," through exposure to a rage greater than anything they have ever seen, into the core of a

revolutionary movement. Thus cadre-building is reduced to an essentially psychological, individual task; this accords with Marcus' (ultimately self-aggrandizing) stand that a "real" revolutionary is defined not by the correctness of his political positions but by the possession of "internal authority." Alas, in one of several indictments of the NCLC membership, Marcus was forced to admit that (with the exception, of course, of himself and a few other initiates) the NCLC is composed of people who are less than "complete revolutionaries." Hence, only a few members of NCLC are to be permitted to participate in this youth work, the others being relegated to the less psychologically demanding NU-WRO, where they will not be intimidated by having to face the psychologically overwhelming "mana" of ghetto youth. "Only those who have really gotten themselves together," said Marcus, would be selected for this work.

The plan seemed simple enough. To youth who according to Marcus make "hustling" a way of life, the NCLC will propose that they cease these small-time operations and execute a bigger rip-off—the seizure of state power. The youth would thus be told that they are wasting their time holding up filling stations and grocery stores when they have the power to "take it all."

A youth movement in New York, Marcus asserted, could immediately wipe out prostitution, drugs, the robbery of ghetto inhabitants and the payment of rent. Marcus revealed his own step-by-step plan for the liquidation of the narcotics problem in New York. *Workers Vanguard* now makes this hitherto secret plan public:

- Stage One: Collect the names and addresses of all Mafia members in New York. (Marcus was understandably less than precise as to how this initial step was to be carried out.)

- Stage Two: Get rid of the pushers. (Marcus was a bit vague about the execution of stage two as well.)

- Stage Three: Wait for the Mafia to retaliate. (This stage, at least, was crystal clear.)

- Stage Four: When it does, allow Mafiosi to pursue a few revolutionary youth, who will lead them into an ambush. Simultaneously, throw rocks through the windows of all Mafia members on the list.

And that, believe it or not, is the solution to the narcotics problem in the capitalist necropolis! Marcus was,

however, careful to warn that until the movement was prepared to execute this plan drugs would continue to pose a problem.

According to Marcus, the Justice Department is now in the process of planning a frame-up of the NCLC. The only thing which has up till now protected the NCLC from the government, he said, has been its "factitious advantage" vis-à-vis the Justice Department, which doesn't want to dignify the



Lyn Marcus

NCLC by prosecuting it. This situation, however, cannot last: the government will attempt to crush the NCLC unless it can be made afraid to do so. Marcus' answer to the terror of governmental repression is the unleashing of ghetto riots; the NCLC must build a "riot potential" strong enough to deter the government from its planned crack-down.

In fact, a nationwide organization of ghetto youth under the direction of a crackpot like Marcus would be just the thing to call down the Justice Department and the FBI! But far more importantly, such a scheme—which abandons the necessary struggle for the construction of the vanguard party of the working class on a political basis—can end only in disaster. Outbreaks of undirected mass rage—although they are understandable and justified—can have no other result than to bring down

This nonsense conflicted with an earlier excuse Herson said he had received over the phone from another OCAW official, who explained that it was unnecessary to call out Sewaren because the terminal was only involved in "marketing," not production. And this from a union which claimed to be "boycotting" precisely the marketing of Shell products!

Schaeffer had been preceded by another International representative, Angelo Augustino, who reported that progress in the strike was very slow. "We're not making any headway whatsoever," he reported. One bureaucrat privately revealed the reason: The money would soon run out, forcing the locals to go back to work, but under separate local agreements, so that the International would not have to put its seal of approval to the failure to achieve at Shell what all other major companies had granted! This is precisely what has happened.

When asked later if any effort were being made to extend the strike to refineries in Venezuela and Curaçao, major Shell installations, the officers had no response, saying that they were

the repressive arm of the bourgeois state, while these victims of capitalist oppression are condemned to live in ghettos devastated in the course of an uprising which had no prospect of success. Only the working class united under the leadership of the Leninist vanguard party can confront and defeat the capitalist state power.

But it is not of the problems of the ghetto-dwellers that Marcus is thinking, but of those of his own organization, faced with the results of a whole chain of hysterical aberrations. The only drawback Marcus can perceive in his get-rich-quick (get-smashed-quick?) scheme for organizing ghetto youth is that the membership of his organization is composed of what he terms "scared bunnies." Thus he sees the organizers of most socialist groups, including the NCLC, as having as their primary task the "amusement" of the membership, so that half the ranks won't quit in any given week and go back to daddy's business, academia or a "meaningful personal life." Marcus followed this revealing statement with a proposal to remedy the situation. Conveniently enough, it turned out to be the very same plan that will free NCLC from governmental repression and wipe out drugs in the ghetto, namely the transformation of street gangs into revolutionary youth. Once the ghetto youth—who by virtue of their all-encompassing rage, will be "complete" revolutionaries—enter the NCLC, their sheer presence will transform the rest of the membership from petty-bourgeois dillitantes who, as Marcus admits, can't decide whether to remain in the organization from one week to the next, into genuine revolutionaries. But it won't be easy, Marcus warns. (Some of the members already appeared a bit timorous.) The process necessary for this great transformation will compel each and every member to look deep within himself to confront his hitherto unadmitted psychological problems—to face his own childhood!—in what will be an agonizing and traumatizing experience of the first magnitude.

But while the "station-master" is devising new games to play with his timetables and (as he himself put it) listening to the inspiration of his guts (while the NCLC ranks endeavor to tighten up theirs sufficiently to look ghetto youth in the eye), serious revolutionists will continue to pursue the task of building the vanguard party rooted in the working class.

We repeat our warning to members of the NCLC: there are elements in the politics of the Labor Committee which can take the NCLC, or a section of it, straight out of the workers movement altogether. The "Operation Mop-Up" program of physical attacks on other left tendencies, and now the call for an apolitical organization of youth gangs on the basis of psychological terror, are proceeding to crystallize these elements into a consistent pattern. ■

simply concentrating on domestic Shell. This went hand in hand with their demagogic appeal to American patriotism against Shell, which is owned primarily by Dutch and British capital; all Americans should support Shell workers against exploitation by foreigners, said the bureaucrats. Supposedly, oil workers would get a better deal from American exploiters!

This bankrupt strategy was uncritically endorsed by Progressive Labor and International Socialists, among others. The IS proclaimed the OCAW's alliance with West Coast environmentalists as "an important step in changing the history of this country" and announced that "a consumer boycott can materially affect the outcome of this strike" (*Workers Power*, 30 March-12 April 1973). Nowhere in the article is there the slightest criticism of the OCAW bureaucracy. The boycott and bloc with liberal ecology freaks were simply a means to save face for the International, a cover for a policy of consciously subverting and suppressing the organized strength of the workers, which could have been mobilized to actually win the strike. ■

## OCAW Leaders Sabotage Shell Strike

While calling for a nationwide consumer boycott of Shell products and playing up to liberals with the slogan, "America's first environmental strike," leaders of the Shell Oil strike allowed the strike to die through cynical, defeatist policies. They refused to extend the strike internationally and even failed to shut Shell down completely in the U.S. While withholding "official" endorsement, they allowed the 1800 workers at the Deer Park refinery near Houston to return to work with terms substantially less than the points on health and safety already agreed to by other major oil companies before the strike began. These terms now form the basis for other "local" agreements.

The defeatist perspective of the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers Union (OCAW) leadership was revealed at a meeting of the union's District Council 8 in New York, 5 May, during the strike. The meeting was addressed by Gene Herson of the Militant-Solidarity Caucus of the National Maritime Union. Herson recounted the efforts of his caucus to stop the scabbing on the Shell strike by the NMU bureaucracy, which was permitting the handling of Shell products on NMU-contract ships. The Militant-Solidarity Caucus had called for "hot-cargoing" all Shell products during the strike (see *WV* No. 20, 11 May 1973). This task was made more difficult, Herson pointed out, by the fact that OCAW workers at the Shell terminal at Sewaren, New Jersey were working during the strike!

OCAW International Secretary-Treasurer Ben Schaeffer replied that Herson was correct about the Sewaren workers' working during the strike, but that the OCAW had decided not to call them out because they were "new" to the OCAW and "uneducated" about unions. Presumably their first "lesson" was entitled, "how to make excuses for strikebreaking"!

# NYC WORKERS LEAGUE CLASS SERIES

# Wohlforth Embraces Pabloism

This is the second of two WV articles dealing with the issues raised in the recent Workers League public class series in New York City.

The Workers League's pretensions to internationalism and the continuity of the Fourth International are just as phony as the pseudo-dialectics which Wohlforth prates about in order to obscure any consideration of program. Thus the WL systematically betrays the program of the FI by, among other things, its constant chasing after militant-talking Stalinists (Mao Tse-tung or Ho Chi Minh) and leftist nationalists (such as Huey Newton), its "critical" support for aspiring labor fakers (Morrissey in the NMU), its adaptation to even the most reactionary elements of the labor bureaucracy (Meany and Abel) and its refusal to fight in the unions for solidarity with the Vietnamese revolution. Now it abandons the Transitional Program explicitly with the line that wage demands are inherently revolutionary, and transitional demands therefore unnecessary and sectarian.

## IC Fiction

But even organizationally, the "internationalism" of the WL is a fiction. Wohlforth equates internationalism with abject subservience to the Socialist Labour League of Gerry Healy, in much the same manner as Earl Browder's Communist Party slavishly capitulated before every twist and turn ordered by Stalin. The Healyite "International Committee" has always been an empty form without content—a rotten bloc between the British SLL and the French Organisation Communiste Internationaliste in which each pursued its own policies (often sharply at variance with one another) and divided up the rest of the world as spheres of influence (Healy getting the English-speaking countries, while the OCI received the rest of Europe and South America).

A carefully preserved secret until 1966 was the fact that there was no discipline in the International Committee, the only basis for decision-making being unanimity. Thus the repeated demands by Healy from 1962 to 1966 that the Spartacist tendency subordinate itself to "international discipline" (which in every case we stated we would do, while refusing to sign, as was the fashion of the Stalinists, documents which amounted to a repudiation of our positions or else simply apolitical demonstrations of servility) were nothing but the capricious whim of a would-be petty dictator. In the fifth class Wohlforth explained this fraud by saying, well, nobody's perfect! But to speak of a federated international bloc as the "International" is no less absurd than to profess that a federated national grouping which does not "yet" have democratic centralism can be a vanguard party.

At the class on Spartacist Wohlforth denounced SL National Chairman James Robertson for alleged "anti-internationalism" because at the 1966 IC Conference Robertson had unwittingly violated an unannounced conference "rule" by missing a session. Wohlforth's demagoguery only revealed the WL's boundless hypocrisy, for the SL had just distributed to the class participants material showing that Wohlforth himself—in direct violation of a categorical instruction from Healy—did not bother to attend the conference at all!

Behind the question of organizational structure (itself a crucial programmatic aspect of Leninism) stands the question of the very nature of the IC as an unprincipled political bloc. For years the SLL and OCI held sharply

counterposed positions on central questions—even on the very nature of the party. Thus the OCI has maintained that the basis of the party is program, while to the SLL, the basis of the party is "Marxist philosophy." Similarly, the OCI held the view that the Fourth International had been destroyed by revisionism and needed to be reconstructed, while the SLL proclaimed that the IC is the Fourth International. Nor was there agreement on issues such as the 1967 Arab-Israeli war (over which the OCI took a revolutionary defeatist position for both sides while the SLL supported the "Arab Revolution"), or the united front (which the SLL sees as a tactic while the OCI supports a "strategic united front").

In his presentation at the seventh class (on the split with the OCI) Wohlforth presented an elaborate fairy-tale history of the IC, explaining that there were, of course, differences, but they had to be discussed instead of precipitously splitting. As revealed by documents published by the SLL and OCI after the split, the actual "discussion" in the IC had the character of two ships passing in the night.

A perfect example was the true story of the "split in the IC at the Essen youth conference." According to the WL/SLL the prime sin of the OCI, its failure to recognize the absolute centrality of the struggle for dialectics, was revealed by the OCI's document for the June 1970



"I can't shut the damn thing off." Bulletin (13 December 1971) cartoon expresses Pablist theory that workers can make revolution through traditional leaders.

London pre-conference of the IC. However, that document was published in late 1969, yet nine months later the SLL had no alternative to offer to the meeting; it also refused to vote on the document. Another twelve months pass and the SLL delegation arrives at the Essen youth conference to be faced with an OCI-written document which had the same line as the previous one; in the meantime, of course, Healy and Co. still had not produced an answer. But this was apparently too much, so in typical Healyite fashion the English delegation offered an amendment-ultimatum on "dialectics" which was voted down by the French-dominated delegates assembly. The SLL now maintains that this is when the IC really split. However, at the time the SLL delegation not only did not take their amendment onto the floor of the conference to fight it out, but they then went on to give the conference enthusiastic coverage in their press; the "already-split" IC continued to appear in the pages of the Bulletin as the continuity of the FI.

## OCI Centrists and SLL Political Bandits

The formal split came when the OCI handed Healy a nice factional club by

supporting the centrist policies of the Partido Obrero Revolucionario, which in the 1971 Bolivian events took a line similar to that of the POUM during the Spanish civil war. To avoid being tarred with the same brush Wohlforth claimed that "Lora [head of the POR] had never been in the International Committee and he never would have been admitted to it without a full discussion on his political history." But, as an SL spokesman pointed out at the class, the Healyites themselves had been very happy to take credit for the influential POR as recently as one month before the military coup (see the uncritical article which hailed the POR as "the Bolivian section of the International Committee" in the Bulletin of 19 July 1971):

At the time of the split, Healy was able to capitalize on the OCI's centrist positions of support for the POR and a "strategic united front" in order to pose as the principled left wing of the IC. But the history of the SLL and WL reveals that they have wallowed in every opportunist deviation for which they now denounce the OCI. Thus, while the OCI accommodated to the French Stalinists by calling for votes to the CP in the recent elections (in spite of the fact that the CP was part of a popular front), the Workers League flatly supported the pop front: "The illusions of the workers can only be exposed by first electing the Left Union in the second round..." (Bulletin, 12 March 1973).

When the OCI and SLL came to a parting of ways in 1971, this finally stripped naked the facade of internationalism of the "International Committee." A true International is composed of tendencies which are defined by program, not geography. (Even in the badly degenerated Socialist Workers Party, whose international ties to the IC had long been merely formal, the motion toward reunification with the Pabloists caused enough concern among some elements to precipitate the formation of an anti-Pabloist faction.) But the 1971 IC split had no ramifications in either of the leading national organizations! Apparently the entire SLL was in agreement with the "British line" and the entire OCI with the "French line."

## Cuba and Inverted Pabloism

The WL class series was an instructive lesson in the methodology of Pabloism. The class on Cuba demonstrated Wohlforth's total confusion about the process of the Cuban revolution which, under petty-bourgeois nationalist leadership, uprooted capitalist property relations and established a deformed workers state. Duplicating in its essentials the Chinese revolution, Cuba illuminated the problem which had faced orthodox Trotskyists following World War II: how could capitalism have been overturned in Eastern Europe, and then China, without proletarian revolutions under Trotskyist leadership? Did this mean our evaluation of Stalinism was wrong? Unable to creatively extend orthodoxy to explain these transformations, the post-war Trotskyist movement's inability to solve this problem opened the road to a revisionist answer: Pablo's 1951 theory that under the pressure of a new objective reality Stalinism could become revolutionary, and thus the Trotskyists had no further function except as a pressure group to aid this "blunted instrument" to realize its new-found revolutionary potential.

The orthodox Trotskyists could only reply by pointing in horror at the necessary consequence: if Pablo's theory were correct, the very founding of the Fourth International was a mistake. Seeking to resist Pablo's liquidationist conclusions, they sought to deny reality until it overwhelmed them (the SWP did not officially characterize China as a deformed workers state until 1955). The response of the Healy tendency to the Cuban revolution was the same: according to the WL/SLL, Cuba is still a capitalist state!

Spartacist spokesmen at the class pointed out that this response accepts the method of Pabloism while seeking to reject its conclusions. At the heart of both is the acceptance of the deformed workers states as being only quantitatively different from healthy workers states. Thus the SWP justified its uncritical accommodation to Castro, saying Lenin's Russia was a very good workers state; Stalin's Russia was a very bad workers state; Castro's Cuba is a pretty good workers state (getting better all the time), and after all, so long as it's a workers state, that's good enough. Healy argues that if a petty-bourgeois leadership could establish a deformed workers state (which, for him, is just another workers state) then the Transitional Program is wrong in claiming that a Trotskyist working class leadership is necessary for successful proletarian revolution: therefore, Cuba is not a workers state.

Confronted with this analysis, Wohlforth vehemently insisted that indeed there "is no qualitative difference" between a healthy and deformed workers state. In this one statement, Wohlforth reveals his fundamental kinship with the Pabloists and sweeps aside the

achievement of Trotsky in recognizing in 1933 that a qualitative change had taken place as a result of the Stalinist degeneration of the Soviet Union and the Third International. The consolidation of power in the hands of a petty-bourgeois stratum (the bureaucracy) made necessary a new international party to struggle for political revolution in the Soviet Union as well as for social revolution against capitalism.

As one could expect by now from the fabled Healyite "dialectics," the SL's position (that Cuba is a deformed workers state) was termed by Wohlforth (who considers Cuba to be capitalist) as "Shachtmanism"! Anyone with the slightest familiarity with the positions of Shachtman (who split from Trotskyism in denying that Russia was a degenerated workers state) can easily

understand the absurdity of such an accusation.

### Vietnam: Pabloism and Social Patriotism

Healy/Wohlforth's contortions over Cuba are nothing, however, in comparison with the blatant and disgusting Pabloism of the WL on the question of Vietnam. In a positively obscene laudatory obituary (*Bulletin*, 22 September 1969) for Ho Chi Minh, the murderer of the Indochinese Trotskyists, the WL refers to him as an "instinctive" fighter against imperialism (akin to Hansen's description of Castro as a "natural" Marxist). Some of the articles of the Healy/Wohlforth tendency on Vietnam could be set side by side with those of the arch-Pabloist Ligue Communiste and even a careful reader would have

trouble figuring out which was which (for example, the reference to the "transcendental power" of "peoples war" in the February 1968 *Fourth International*).

Wohlforth's class presentation on Vietnam was a textbook example of Pabloist method. To begin with, the Vietnam struggle of the 1960's was essentially a "movement of the colonial peoples under Stalinist leadership." It was under Stalinist leadership, but "for 20 years Stalinism could not compromise the movement as it wished to"! And, of course, there are different wings of the Stalinists and "the North Vietnamese have time and time again come into conflict with the Soviets; the latest time was last December." To top it all off was a little bit of spicy orthodoxy, claiming that "our position is for victory of the NLF against the U.S. im-

perialists."

Wohlforth pointed out the fundamental unity of the WL position on Vietnam and its support for the "Arab revolution" and for the bourgeois Indian army in the 1971 war with Pakistan over Bangla Desh. (At the time, the *Bulletin*, 20 December 1971, gave "critical" support to Indira Gandhi. In the class Wohlforth revealed what "critical" support means to the WL, saying "we were 1,000 percent for the victory of the Indian army.") He also emphasized several times that "the colonial revolution is not simply a workers revolution."

To begin with, the term "colonial revolution" has been given circulation in the "Trotskyist" movement by the Pabloists who, with their theory of "epicenters" and "blunted instruments," wish to deny the world-wide unity of the permanent revolution. Trotskyists do not call for a "colonial" revolution, Brother Wohlforth, but for a proletarian (yes, workers!) revolution in the backward countries (such as Russia), leaning on the peasantry, to successfully carry through even the democratic tasks of national liberation and agrarian revolution. Like the Pabloists of the United Secretariat the WL used the label "colonial" revolution to justify political support to various left-talking nationalists.

The "method" of the Healyite Workers League is thus ultimately that of Pabloism. No longer believing in the possibility of proletarian revolution under Trotskyist leadership, the Pabloists seek to construct a rationale for tailing non-proletarian strata (e.g., petty-bourgeois nationalist movements, "left" Stalinists, out-bureaucrats in the unions), on the grounds that the "objective situation" compels even a "blunted instrument" (e.g., the Stalinist NLF in Vietnam) to make the revolution. In contrast to those "purists" or "sectarians" who insist that only the proletariat, under Trotskyist leadership, can create a

*continued on page 8*

# WL Debates Spartacist in L.A.



Tweet Carter speaks for SL at SL/WL debate in Los Angeles.

WV PHOTO

The elusive Los Angeles debate between the Spartacist League and the Workers League actually took place on Thursday, 17 May at noon on the UCLA campus, the only time and place the WL would accept. At the same time the WL continues to refuse to debate the SL elsewhere, despite repeated challenges from SL locals in New York, the Bay Area and the Midwest. The WL had earlier tried to worm out of its offer by lying, claiming that "Spartacist Refuses Debate Challenge" (*Bulletin*, 16 April 1973). The SL had written a letter accepting the debate, suggesting it be held not on a weekday at noon on a college campus, but in a central Los Angeles location on a weekend night, when trade unionists could attend (see *WV* No. 19, 27 April 1973). After the WL had announced in its usual peremptory style, "The negotiations are over. The matter is closed," Workers League National Secretary Tim Wohlforth again agreed to the debate when the *Bulletin's* lies on the debate issue were exposed by the SL at a public meeting. Thus, after a seven-year refusal to meet the SL in debate, the WL was forced to come out into the open in Los Angeles (where its local organization has been virtually shattered and it therefore has little left to lose).

"You get a rat in the corner and it will fight; you get a fake Trotskyist, a gangsterist part of the workers movement, to a place where it can't get out and it will even try to defend its politics," explained Tweet Carter, Political Chairman of the Los Angeles local of the SL, in opening the debate.

The Workers League split its floor time between Dennis Brehm on "The Crisis" and Irving Hall on "Theory," with WL West Coast organizer Jeff Sebastian limiting himself to remarks from the floor. After Brehm set the framework by identifying the basic contradiction in society today as that between gold and the amount of money in circulation [!], their politics man, Hall, rejected programmatic differences as "nitpicking over different little disagreements over police strikes, Bangla Desh, etc." Instead of wasting time on such "petty squabbles," he simply asserted that the SL was Pabloist, shared methodology with Shachtmanism and was totally hostile to objective reality as well as to the Fourth International.

Hall's analysis of Watergate finally broke through the mystical fog of "method" which the WL uses to avoid any examination of its actual policies.

He polemicized against the SL's supposed "inability to see Watergate as any different from the way *Time* magazine or *Newsweek* sees it, somehow a comic opera, where we sit back in our middle-class glory and laugh at poor Nixon's discomfiture at a time when this country faces the most serious political crisis in its history based upon the whole economic death agony of capitalism in its final throes."

Carter demolished this as sensationalist crisis-mongering. For the WL, she said,

"... the October Revolution was a mosquito bite; the First World War—a little conflict; the Great Depression—no crisis; the Second World War—well, a lot of people got killed. But Watergate and gold! That's the crisis of humanity!"

Carter identified the method behind the continual claim of the "crisis at hand," over which the WL has been in a frenzy for the past ten years, as an automatic theory of revolution where revolutionaries are no longer needed, where "The Crisis" will finish off capitalism, eliminating the need for the vanguard party.

Trotsky characterized the epoch of imperialism as being in decay since 1914, with the working class incapable of seizing power while dominated by its bureaucratic leadership, the agents of the bourgeoisie. The Workers League, in contrast, sees Watergate as the final crisis of capitalism, with the crumbling of the bourgeois parties forcing the present leadership of the workers movement (Meany, Abel and Co.) to contend for state power because (believes the WL) there is no capitalist alternative.

In the discussion period, Bob Larkin, Los Angeles organizer of the RCY, pointed to recent WL slogans calling for "Nixon Out, Labor In" and "Labor Must Force Nixon to Resign," which turn labor into an abstraction, an undifferentiated mass, and vitiate the Trotskyist struggle for revolutionary leadership of the class. "To talk about the collapse of the capitalist system outside of the internal political life and struggle of the working class is simple objectivism and idealism in the service of Pabloism," he said.

To charges that the SL nitpicks over details, Carter counterposed the programmatic consistency of the SL, which still sells the first issue of *Spartacist* (published in 1963), to the Workers League, whose positions wander all over the map. "What is Marxist method

for? Is it to hang on the wall? Method is for the proletariat to use in deciding what to do... If you've got a method that keeps bringing up the wrong answers, there must be something wrong with your method. So 'The Dialectic,' 'The Method,' is something the Workers League brings out of the closet to obscure its real betrayals of the working class," she said.

"There's been a lot of talk about Spartacist nitpicking, right? So let's do what they call nitpicking," Carter added, pointing to the WL's support of Stanley Hill in the SSEU (welfare workers' union in New York), its subsequent denunciation of him a few days later and then endorsement of him in the following election.

"A group that calls itself Trotskyist supports an incumbent bureaucrat who they themselves say is betraying the working class—the fate of the workers in an important union is 'nitpicking.'"

"In Bangla Desh, the Workers League supported the Indian bourgeoisie and called for those troops going into Bangla Desh. They knew perfectly well India wants half of Bengal about as clearly as Pakistan does. But the fate of the Bengali people doesn't concern the Workers League—it's 'nitpicking.'"

"I challenge the Workers League to defend their line that the cops are workers, or is that 'nitpicking'? Is whether or not cops are scabs, murderers, and a main arm of defense of the capitalist class, or whether they are workers whose demands for wages and working conditions have to be supported, 'nitpicking'?"

The WL "method" was revealed as one of abandoning the struggle to mobilize the working class under Trotskyist leadership until such later date when the class will have fully digested the experiences of betrayal. In the meantime it is supposedly the duty of "communists" to lead the workers into these betrayals. On the subject of the "Brotherhood Caucus" (a reformist group posturing as militants in the Fremont GM plant), Hall was quite explicit:

"We have no illusions about the Brotherhood Caucus, but the Brotherhood Caucus has a certain following within the trade union. The working class is going to have to go through certain struggles behind certain misleaders and you go through that struggle with them, while at the same time pointing out the basic class positions of those leaders that they've got to follow."

The Workers League tries to convince its followers that to be a Trotskyist means supporting forces which

# Program for Power: Early Communist Work in the

Chris Knox

Opportunists denounce the Spartacist League as "sectarian" for our insistence that only a full transitional program can properly orient the struggle in the trade unions against the union bureaucracy and against capitalism. In its 16 April *Bulletin*, for instance, the pseudo-Trotskyist Workers League denounces Spartacist in a frenzied front-page editorial:

"Spartacist says essentially the following about the struggle in auto. Wages, line speed, job security, grievances, and the right to strike are all trade union demands. But Marxists, at least according to Spartacist, are for revolution as opposed to winning these 'reformist' demands. Spartacist therefore concludes that the basic demand that must be made is: 'Communism!' Nothing less will satisfy these ferocious blabbermouths." [emphasis ours]

This gross distortion of our position appeared as part of a defense of the auto program of the Trade Union Alliance for a Labor Party (TUALP), the latest organizational embodiment of the WL's program for the unions. This auto program consists solely of points on wages, job security, speedup, grievances, workers rights, overtime, pensions, health, safety and vacations. It thus totally omits not only the labor party (!), but any reference to racial or sexual discrimination, economic protectionism, war, or the question of power (the slogans of workers control and a workers government), all of which directly affect the unions in the epoch of imperialism. The WL defense rests its case with the assertion that "simple trade union demands" are "profoundly revolutionary."

The Workers League is merely one example—and certainly not the most organizationally significant example—of the pervasive opportunism of the U.S. left today, which passively caves in to trade-union economism and workerism, i.e., the worship of the present level of the class struggle.

The Trotskyist "Transitional Program," adopted in 1938 at the founding conference of the Fourth International, was presented by Trotsky as a program for the trade unions. It was designed to provide not "opposition" to reform demands, as the WL alleges, but a *bridge* between the day-to-day trade-union struggles and the revolutionary goals of the proletariat. The program included demands for a sliding scale of wages and hours to combat unemployment; for factory committees, workers control and expropriation of industry and banks; for struggle against discrimination against minorities and against imperialist war; and, most importantly, for a clear expression of the goal of working-class power: for soviets and a workers government.

## Apologists for Reformism

Like the WL, the International Socialists claim to agree with the Transitional Program, but find the SL "sectarian" and "revolutionary posturers" for applying it to the present-day situation in the unions. The WL justifies its position that trade-union demands are "revolutionary" on the grounds of the intensity of the capitalist crisis, which it claims makes even minimal demands impossible to attain under capitalism. The IS, in contrast, defends its accommodation to economism on the grounds that the crisis isn't intense enough: when the class struggle is at a higher level, "then" the full Transitional Program will be "relevant." By these two mutually exclusive

rationales, both groups arrive at the same position of rejection of the Transitional Program in practice! They are joined in this conclusion by the other ostensibly "Trotskyist" tendencies, each travelling its own variation on these two paths: the minuscule *Spark* group, the Class Struggle League and, of course, the Socialist Workers Party. The SWP, in its total abandonment of its Trotskyist heritage, has developed particularly odious "transitional" bridges to feminism, black nationalism, youth culture, etc., while ignoring, for the most part, work in the trade unions (or conducting it on the most minimal basis, avoiding all opposition to the trade-union bureaucracy).

The abandonment of the Transitional Program in practice is nothing more nor less than a return to the flawed conceptions which preceded both the Fourth and Third Internationals, i.e., to the old social-democratic conception of "minimum" and "maximum" program: the first for day-to-day issues, the second for Sunday speech-making about "socialism." The social-democratic trade-union bureaucracy opposed any intrusion of the "maximum" program into the "real" work of the party. It is thus quite natural that for these supposed "Trotskyists" of today, the Transitional Program has taken on the character of a "maximum" program, the intrusion of which into their "real" practice would upset the opportunism which is possible only on the basis of their minimum program.

Having thus come together in opposition to the Transitional Program in practice, it is equally natural that the ostensible "Trotskyists" find themselves rubbing shoulders with the Maoists and Stalinists of all varieties, particularly the Communist Party, which long ago abandoned the program of Lenin and Trotsky for a return to a reformist practice totally consistent with its overall strategy of forming broad blocs between the labor movement and the liberal bourgeoisie (the "popular front"). Thus the United National Caucus in the auto union, a trade-unionist, bureaucratic-careerist group, is a typical catchall supported by the CP, IS and CSL particularly. Even the frenzied National Caucus of Labor Committees, which claims to reject trade unionism altogether, can be found in UNC meetings alongside CP supporters pushing the same pop-frontist, liberal politics with a different organizational format. That the WL politically belongs in the UNC is clear not only from its auto program, but from its absurdly sectarian reason for avoiding endorsement: that the UNC doesn't fight hard enough for wages!

## International Communist Strategy

The Spartacist League alone stands not only on the Transitional Program as formulated by Trotsky, but on its antecedents as developed by the first four congresses of the Communist International (CI) and carried out (not without errors) by CI sections during its revolutionary period through 1923. The trade-union work of the Workers (Communist) Party of the U.S., particularly through its trade-union arm, the Trade Union Educational League (TUEL), provides an example of communist work in the unions with tremendous relevance for today.

At once the reformists of all varieties will exclaim, "But that was a different period, one in which revolution was seen as the order of the day by masses of workers!" The period was

indeed different, but the tasks of the communists in the trade unions were not so different as the opportunists rush to assume. The Third Congress of the CI directed that:

"In the United States of North America . . . the communists are confronted with the first and simplest task of creating a communist nucleus and connecting it with the working masses."

—"Thesis on Tactics,"

*Theses and Resolutions adopted at the Third World Congress of the Communist International, June 22-July 12, 1921*

and Third Congresses of the CI (1920 and 1921) fought for the utilization of all arenas and all methods of struggle in order to deepen connections with the masses and combat the false leaders of the workers. By the Fourth Congress (1922) Lenin and Trotsky were continuing this effort with a proposal for the tactic of united fronts with Social Democrats and others in order to demonstrate to the workers that only the Communists were for a genuine class front against the bourgeoisie on the basis of consistent struggle for all the workers' interests, including im-



While the level of strike activity and general class consciousness was higher, the vanguard party in the U.S. was still a very small force facing a reactionary bureaucracy in the trade unions which it had to expose and replace in order to gain the confidence and leadership of the workers.

This situation was typical throughout the CI, despite the fact that most of the European parties were much larger than the American section and therefore in a better position to gain hegemony of class leadership. Through lack of preparation, and without an experienced cadre and leadership, the Communist Parties were unable to take advantage of the massive post-war revolutionary wave, which peaked during 1919-1920 in Europe and America. Lenin wrote "*Left-wing Communism, An Infantile Disorder*" in 1920 precisely to combat tendencies which saw the revolution as inevitable and opposed work in the unions or for partial demands as "opportunist." The Second

mediate interests. Lenin and Trotsky were prepared to force a split with all those "ultra-leftists" who still considered such a course opportunist.

The work of the TUEL in the 1922-23 period was an expression in the U.S. of the "united front" tactics Lenin and Trotsky were urging throughout the CI. These tactics were seen as necessary precisely because the revolutionary wave had ebbed, and the Communist Parties were not in a position to exercise leadership of the working class immediately. The trade-union work of the Workers (Communist) Party was undertaken on the basis of the defeat in factional struggle of the ultra-leftists who urged "dual unionism"—i.e., opposition to any work in the dominant, reactionary American Federation of Labor (AFL)—and underground work on principle, thereby avoiding all contact with partial demands and the mass movement itself. (The ultra-leftists had been largely

# Trade Unions



Foster and Ruthenberg attend 1924 convention of Workers (Communist) Party.

responsible for the failure to seize the opportunities of 1919-1920.)

## Origins of the TUEL

The TUEL was not simply a creation of the W(C)P, but was taken over by it in 1922 as the result of a fusion with William Z. Foster's group of Chicago-based trade-union militants. While the bulk of the left in the preceding epoch had been ardently dual unionist, Foster had become convinced that this strategy was sterile and in effect surrendered the fight for leadership of the organized workers to their reactionary, craft leaderships. But Foster bent the stick too far the other way, and was willing to surrender his political program in order to remain in a position to apply pressure to the Gompers bureaucracy to support his organizing drives. Thus in 1919, when called before a Senate investigating committee looking into the steel strike Foster was organizing, Foster dropped his entire political program, ardently avowing his patriotism and his selling of Liberty Bonds during the war.

From Foster's side, the fusion with the W(C)P was based on his agreement with Lenin's "boring from within" tactic, an explicit reversal for the U.S. Communists. Foster continued to lead the TUEL and became the head of the party's trade-union work. Thus if anything, one would expect to find in the TUEL of this period not sectarian errors, but opportunist ones, whether because of Foster's trade-unionist predilections or an over-zealous application of the CI's united-front line.

In general we find neither, however, though the W(C)P did make errors which affected its trade-union work. Under the leadership of the Party, the TUEL was re-founded in 1922 squarely on the basis of the program of the CI. Despite its emphasis on the "turn to the masses" and willingness to struggle for partial demands, the CI's program was clearly conceived of as *transitional*:

*"The alternative offered by the Communist International in place of the minimum program of the reformists and centrists is: the struggle for the concrete need of the proletariat and demands, which, in their application, undermine the power of the bourgeoisie, organize the proletariat, for the transition to the proletarian dictatorship, even if the latter have not yet grasped the meaning of such proletarian dictatorship...."*

*"In formulating their partial demands, the Communist Parties must take heed that these demands, based on the deeply rooted needs of the masses, are such as will organize the masses and not merely lead them into struggle. All concrete watchwords, originating in the*

economic needs of the workers, must be assimilated to the struggle for the control of production, which must not assume the form of a bureaucratic organization of social economy under capitalism, but of an organization fighting against capitalism through workers committees as well as through revolutionary trade unions." [emphasis in original]

—"Thesis on Tactics"

The TUEL, while it conducted mass campaigns and made united-front alliances with sections of the trade-union bureaucracy around key individual issues, such as amalgamation of the craft unions into mass industrial unions, for recognition of Soviet Russia and for a labor party, *began* with its full program and propagandized for it throughout all its work.

In addition, unlike almost every trade-union caucus today—and certainly *all* those supported by the opportunist "Trotskyists" and other "revolutionaries"—the TUEL had a *political* conception of membership. In order to join, one had to have general agreement with the basic program, which was described and summarized in eight points in Foster's *Bankruptcy of the American Labor Movement* (Labor Herald Library, 1922). The first point was "abolish capitalism, for a workers republic":

*"The Trade Union Educational League proposes to develop the trade unions from their present antiquated and stagnant condition into modern, powerful labor organizations, capable of waging successful warfare against capital.... Instead of advocating the prevailing shameful and demoralizing nonsense about harmonizing the interests of capital and labor, it is firing the workers' imagination and releasing their wonderful idealism and energy by propagating the inspiring goal of abolition of capitalism and the establishment of a workers republic."*

This was intended to be a transitional formulation for "dictatorship of the proletariat," in exactly the same way as Trotsky's call for a "Workers and Farmers Government" in the 1938 program. Throughout the program of the CI and its sections in this period, the concept of transitional demands is manifest: obviously they were not a later "invention" of Trotsky!

The second point in the TUEL program was, "Repudiate class collaborationism, for a class struggle policy." This was a general demand designed to sum up the entire alternate perspective to be presented to the reactionary AFL bureaucracy.

The third point was for affiliation of the unions to the Red International of Labor Unions (RILU), which was the international trade-union arm of the CI. Founded in 1922, the RILU provided an organizing pole for oppositionists in

the established unions and for the many unions, often led by revolutionary syndicalists attracted to the banner of the Russian Revolution, which had been ruthlessly expelled from the established federations by Social Democrats and reformists.

The fourth point was "Support the Russian Revolution." The revolution, of course, had split the workers movement of the entire world between those who wanted to make revolution in their own countries and those who did not. Beyond this, however, the demand had specific connotations in campaigns conducted by the TUEL for aid to alleviate the famine, diplomatic recognition, etc.

Fifth was the demand for industrial unionism, which was the key trade-union issue, since the vast bulk of the industrial workers, including a disproportionately large section of the non-English-speaking immigrants, was unorganized. This demand counterposed masses of workers to the conservative, craft-based bureaucracy.

Sixth was "Combat dual unionism," which the TUEL was constantly forced to raise against the influence of other radicals, such as the Wobblies (IWW), who urged the abandonment of the struggle and set up dual unions every time the bureaucracy succeeded in a new outrage. The TUEL advocated an orientation toward work in the established unions even on the part of expelled locals or sections, with affiliation to RILU as a long-range alternative. The TUEL and RILU's call for trade-union unity, however, was never the "unity" of capitulation! RILU/TUEL insisted that expelled union bodies seek readmittance, but only on the basis of their freedom to continue propagandizing for class-struggle policies. (This contrasts sharply with the trade-union reformism of the Workers League, which advocated reunification of the break-away Social Services Employees Union [SSEU] in New York with its AFL-CIO parent on the *bureaucracy's* sellout terms.)

Seventh was a demand for a shop delegate system. Shop floor representation was generally lacking in unions at the time. Finally, the eighth point was for independent working-class political action. This rapidly transformed itself into the demand for a labor party, which was then distorted by the W(C)P leadership into the campaign for the Farmer-Labor Party.

## Blocs Based on Program

Thus the TUEL began with membership based on its full program, which was raised in all the unions in which it did work through its members and the monthly organ, Labor Herald. In addition, together with the W(C)P operating in its own name, the TUEL conducted broad campaigns around key demands such as recognition, amalgamation and a labor party, in which it entered united-front alliances with sections of the trade-union bureaucracy such as the Fitzpatrick/Nockels/Brown leadership of the Chicago Federation of Labor (CFL). The issues on which the TUEL made united-front alliances were key parts of the TUEL program around which masses of workers could be mobilized in opposition to the bulk of the bureaucracy. With the exception of the bloc with Fitzpatrick's Farmer-Labor Party, they were not political compromises, but points on which sections of the bureaucracy were *forced* to come over to the Communists, which tended to build Communist leadership of

the mass movement. Thus after a year of working on the amalgamation campaign (which Foster had gotten approved by the CFL without even bothering to consult Fitzpatrick beforehand), the W(C)P's forces dramatically outnumbered Fitzpatrick's at the 1923 Chicago convention of the Farmer-Labor Party. Furthermore, the issues on which the Communists made blocs tended to reinforce each other, creating a vast political gulf between the party's allies and the rest of the trade-union bureaucracy. Thus Fitzpatrick, who supported recognition, amalgamation and a labor party, was cut off financially by the AFL bureaucracy and denounced as a Communist "dupe" by Gompers.

One serious criticism modifies this perspective, however. Despite the W(C)P's initial call for a labor party as a "class party" with "the abolition of wage slavery, the establishment of a workers republic and a collectivist system of production" (*For a Labor Party*, a statement by the Workers Party, October 1922), as its goals, the Pepper/Lovestone leadership failed to carry out this line consistently: the Farmer-Labor campaign into which they took the party was flawed. Besides approaching the program of the proposed party as though it has to be reformist, thereby capitulating in advance to the trade-union bureaucracy (see *WV* No. 13, November 1972), they failed to recognize the contradiction of the F-LP as a hopeless attempt to combine in one party the class interests of two classes: the working class and a section of the petty bourgeoisie. This error was compounded later, after the split with Fitzpatrick at the 1923 convention, into further errors, for which the CI had to call Pepper/Lovestone to task. Instead of simply entering Fitzpatrick's F-LP, the Communists should have held out the single-class party issue as their condition for support, while continuing to bloc with Fitzpatrick on other issues.

In addition, other, less serious criticisms can be made of the party and its trade-union work during this period, but they do not change our overall assessment of the work in 1922-23 as exemplary. If the TUEL had succeeded in taking over the AFL on the basis of its program and united-front alliances, the AFL would have been in the hands of revolutionary leadership. Further political struggle and clarification—even splits—would no doubt have been necessary, but only to prevent political *retreat*, not to establish the basic revolutionary beachhead.

## Union Elections

Foster's chief strategy for union elections was to make blocs with trade-union allies rather than simply running TUEL candidates. But support was generally made on the basis of the TUEL program. Thus Ross Knudsen, backed by TUEL for president of the Machinists union in 1922, won 30% of the votes on the basis of supporting RILU, industrial unionism and the call for a workers republic. The TUEL did not support intra-bureaucratic rivalries or careerists limiting their programs to "better" unionism. It blocked with and gave critical support to other elements only on the basis of qualitative *political* counterposition to the pro-capitalist bureaucracy as such.

The test of a correct united front or bloc is that the issues upon which it is based would have to be *abandoned* before any reintegration into the mainstream

*continued on page 9*

# ...Wohlforth

healthy workers state and open the road to socialism, the WL in truly Pabloist fashion embraces the most "left" of what is, instead of undertaking the arduous task of building the Trotskyist party, the embodiment of the Transitional Program of the Fourth International.

To Wohlforth's apology for the Vietnamese Stalinists, SL supporters at the fifth class counterposed the Trotskyist position of unconditional defense of the deformed workers states against imperialism and political revolution against the bureaucratic misleadership which sabotages that defense and the further progress of the socialist revolution. To this Lucy St. John, editor of the *Bulletin*, counting on the ignorance or cynicism of WL members, made the fantastic charge that "Spartacist refuses to call for military defense of the Vietnamese workers." On the basis of this flat lie, WL supporters proceeded to accuse the SL of "Shachtmanism" on Vietnam. In the fashion of all Stalinist apologists, the WL seeks to link authentic Trotskyism with those, like Shachtman, whose anti-Stalinism proceeds from their motion toward reconciliation with the bourgeoisie.

Anyone remotely familiar with the history of the Spartacist League knows that the SL has consistently fought for military defense of the Vietnamese revolution, for the exclusion of the bourgeoisie from the antiwar movement and for working-class strike action against the war. The SL is the *only* tendency which has consistently raised the Vietnam war in its *trade-union* work, calling for immediate withdrawal of U.S. forces and solidarity with the Vietnamese revolution. In contrast, the WL has time after time capitulated on the defense of the Vietnamese revolution in order to pursue its opportunist appetites.

SL speakers at the class on Vietnam cited as examples the 1971 program of the WL youth group (Young Socialists) which did not mention this demand; the refusal of the WL's short-lived "Trade Unionists for a Labor Party" front group to include *any mention* of the war or racial oppression in its program (*Bulletin*, 18 December 1967); the WL's support for U.S. Senator Vance Hartke and the SWP in the brutal physical expulsion of SL and Progressive Labor supporters who were demanding the ousting of the bourgeoisie from the July 1971 NPAC conference.

At the fourth class the SL distributed to those attending copies of a 1965 leaflet signed by Tim Wohlforth (along with all the pacifist social-patriots, Stalinists, SWP, PL, etc.) which demanded simply "Stop the War in Vietnam Now!" and continued:

"... The war in Vietnam is not necessary for national security. The United States is the richest, most powerful, most heavily armed nation in the world. A continuation of the conflict cannot enhance the honor of the American people..." [emphasis in original]

## Meany as "Blunted Instrument"

It is in its policies toward the union movement that the Workers League has demonstrated in the grossest fashion its fundamentally Pabloist method. The WL has always conceived of its role as that of a left pressure on the existing Meanyite bureaucracy, which the WL claimed would be forced to build a labor party by the mounting unrest in the union ranks. Wohlforth has heralded every cynical and empty "labor party" threat by the bureaucrats, deliberately masking the fact that these statements were designed as back-handed support to Nixon by a labor bureaucracy so reactionary that it could not swallow the "radical" McGovern.

For example, the 17 July 1972 *Bulletin* front-page banner headline proclaimed, "AFL-CIO Tops Threaten La-

bor Party at Miami." The 25 September 1972 *Bulletin* front page crowed "Steel Convention Lambasts Democrats" and triumphantly hailed Meany's overture to Nixon as if it were a step toward a break with bourgeois politics in favor of a workers party!

"Meany made it even more clear than before that the fundamental question was not just McGovern but was indeed the support of labor for the Democrats which has gone on for some 36 years and today is at the breaking point."

One issue of the *Bulletin* featured a cartoon showing a locomotive (the working class) driven by an uneasy Meany rolling over the capitalists. The implication is clear: Meany is the "blunted instrument" who can be pushed, unwillingly to be sure, into leading the workers against the class enemy. This cartoon is the epitome of Pabloism. Reflecting the objectivism which lies at the heart of the Healyite method, this cartoon denies Trotsky's

WV PHOTO



SL/RCY supporter speaks at WL class.

statement that the crisis of humanity is reduced to the crisis of revolutionary leadership, instead investing the present leaders of the class with the power to fight for the workers' interests. The crisis of leadership becomes irrelevant.

In order to climb in bed with the labor bureaucrats the WL has always pursued the most shameless economist policies in its relatively sparse trade-union work. Hence the constant calls for a labor party formed by the bureaucrats (and based on the bureaucrats' anti-communist program); hence the deliberate omission of the war and race questions from the 1967 TULP program; hence the "critical support" to out-bureaucrats like Hill of the SSEU and Morrissey of the NMU.

A highlight of the class series was the intervention by members of the Militant-Solidarity Caucus of the NMU who pointed out that the WL's real appetites were revealed by the *Bulletin's* support to Morrissey, whose entire program consists of vague promises of democracy and a policy of suing the union in the capitalist courts (which the WL claims to oppose). In contrast to Morrissey, the M-SC is based on a full program which includes the demand for a labor party to fight for a worker's government and international class solidarity with the Vietnamese revolution. Also unlike Morrissey, the M-SC has waged a determined fight against the discriminatory job-trusting "group system," called for building an international union instead of protectionist legislation and campaigned for the release of WL supporter Juan Fariñas (who was jailed after a frame-up conviction for "draft evasion"). In a classic statement of the totally reactionary implications of WL policies in the unions, Wohlforth remarked at the fifth class:

"Our policy in the NMU, in the Mineworkers, in the SSEU, is to support left

bureaucratic layers in the elections, and then criticize them. We support Morrissey 100 percent in the elections and criticize him down the line.... The Militant-Solidarity Caucus is just a showpiece and goes against the movement of the working class.... Morrissey is just a bastard!—but he's an out-bastard! We will support the out-bastards against the in-bastards every time, just as long as we get a little room to breathe in the unions."

So, according to Wohlforth, the demand for a labor party, the struggle against the special oppression of youth through the "group system," even defense of the WL *cause célèbre* Fariñas—all this "goes against the movement of the working class." To grasp the incredible cynicism of the WL, one need only recall that Wohlforth referred to the 1971 NYC police strike as an expression of the movement of the working class! That is the result of WL Pabloism: support for cops and bureaucrats and opposition to real class-struggle politics!

## The "Final" Crisis

Behind Wohlforth's rejection of Trotskyist trade-union work as an "empty showpiece" lies his unsated appetite for a "left" section of the trade-union bureaucracy to tail-end. (Similarly Healy, who claims to have broken with Pabloism in 1953, has never repudiated his policies of the 1940's and 1950's, when he was deeply submerged in the "Labour left" in a classic example of Pabloist "entrism *sui generis*" which lasted more than a decade.) In order to fulfill this appetite Wohlforth must, however, have something to bargain with, and this means building a movement with at least some pretense to revolutionary aspirations. Such a movement will inevitably be composed of human beings, and Wohlforth must therefore reckon with the possibility that at least occasionally some of his followers will feel the need to explain to themselves the bizarre flip-flops in WL policies. To handle this "unfortunate" eventuality one needs a "theory" which explains why selling out the rank and file to the bureaucrats is really an "expression of the movement of the working class." This is the purpose of the crisis-mongering of the Workers League.

The essence of the Healyite "economic analysis" is the contention that the "post-war boom" has been brought to an end by the international financial crisis: Since gold reserves can only cover at best around 10 percent of the value of world trade, the capitalist system must inevitably collapse. In other words, we have here the keystone to all objectivist theories—the *final* crisis. Exaggerated? Let the SLL/WL speak for themselves:

"Ever since 1914 the capitalist system has been gripped by contradictions that could only be solved by slump or war. Now its corpse—bloated by the post-war inflation—has burst. And the system is turning to dust..."

—"Capitalism Hits the Dust as Nixon Puts the Boot In," *Workers Press*, 15 February 1973

"The latest moves by the Nixon administration in devaluing the dollar mark a rapid acceleration of the capitalist system towards a breakdown and crisis deeper than at any time in its history." [emphasis in original]

—"Development of the Post-War Economic Crisis—Draft Resolution of the Socialist Labour League," *Workers Press*, 24 February 1973

"The most frantic gold rush in modern history... is a warning to the working class that the latest dollar devaluation is a direct prelude to the complete collapse of the world economic system." [emphasis in original]

—"Gold Price Soars to New Heights," *Bulletin*, 5 March 1973

If such a crisis is so severe that it can *destroy* the economic base of capitalism, the bourgeoisie will be inexorably driven to fascism while the labor bureaucrats (in the WL's cloud-cuckoo-land of economic determinism) *must* therefore fight for the interests of the working class.

"The next Nixon government will not compromise with the working class as past administrations—including his own

—have. Rather, he plans to run the equivalent of a war-time government that will confront the working class head-on, seek to smash its unions and living conditions, and establish a naked dictatorship that will whip American workers into submission.

"These remarks by Nixon must be seen in the light of the deepening economic crisis which has destroyed the basis for compromise. There is no way that a decisive collision between the government and the working class can be avoided."

—*Bulletin*, 4 December 1972

Thus, you see, it is all right to call on the arch-reactionaries Meany, Abel or Van Arsdale to form a labor party, since the terminal crisis makes a decisive collision "unavoidable." And, of course, what need is there for the Transitional Program, since even "simple trade union demands are today so profoundly revolutionary" (*Bulletin*, 16 April 1973)?

In contrast with the SL, which sees recurring cycles of booms and crises in a world capitalist system that has been decaying at least since 1914, Wohlforth proudly proclaims that his tendency has recognized the imminence of The Crisis "since 1962." The absurdity of this stance is obvious: even if the world capitalist economy were to collapse tomorrow into the worst depression of all time, to take credit for prescience on the grounds that one has spent the last eleven years predicting its imminent arrival is akin to crying all week that Monday is coming and then patting oneself on the back when it finally arrives! Periodic crises are inevitable for the bourgeois order, and at some point the WL's crisis-mongering will undoubtedly intersect reality.

However, so far Wohlforth shows a remarkably poor sense of timing: The post-war boom is supposed to have lasted until 1961, ending around the time of the Belgian general strike. But even Mandel, author of the Pabloist theory of "neo-capitalism," recognizes recessions in 1948-49, 1953-54, 1957-58 and 1960-61. And in the U.S. 1962 marked the beginning of a massive capital investment boom (investment increased an average of 11 percent per year during 1962-66)! Currently the WL claims we are in the midst of the worst crisis ever, which has driven the profit rate to "below the level of zero percent" (*Bulletin*, 12 February 1973), when in fact we are in the middle-to-late stages of a boom which sent profits up more than 25 percent during the first quarter of 1973.

## Healy's Cross of Gold

One of the more peculiar aspects of the Healyite economic theories is the explanation of "The Crisis" as being caused by the insufficient supply of gold, thereby placing the SLL/WL in a long line of monetary quacks, beginning with Proudhon and running through William Jennings Bryan, de Gaulle and Lyn Marcus. According to the SLL:

"While prices, stimulated by government inflationary policies, have risen... five or six times on their pre-war level, gold was held down in price for 37 years.

"It is in this crisis that gold is enacting its revenge for all these years in which the Keynesians tried to tamper with the law of value..."

"Without gold, products cannot enter circulation and become commodities. The rush into gold and the flight from all forms of paper—the feature which now overshadows everything in the crisis—means a collapse of commodity production for the world market..."

—"The Dollar Crisis" (*Bulletin* pamphlet, 1973), p. 23

This approach is totally counterposed to Marxist economic science. As an SL supporter pointed out in the sixth class, Marx insisted that the basis of economic crises was in capitalist *production*, not circulation. The root cause of all crises is that capital expands faster than the surplus value that it generates (i.e., the rate of profit falls). Marx dismissed credit theories of crisis out of hand:

"In investigating why the general possibility of crisis turns into a real

crisis...it is therefore quite superfluous to concern oneself with the forms of crisis which arise out of the development of money as *means of payment*." [emphasis in original]

—Theories of Surplus Value, Ch. 17

Perhaps the most striking departure from Marxism by Healyite economic theory is the argument that inflation has (only temporarily, of course) suspended the law of value. According to the SLL's monetary "expert" Peter Jeffries, "The operation of the law of value has...been 'suspended' or 'avoided' throughout much of the boom period" (*Newsletter*, 30 March 1968). In the first place, there was no such "post-war boom" in the sense of a qualitatively different period (if the law of value was "denied" for "27 years," as the 28 May *Bulletin* alleges, that certainly would be a qualitative change). Following World War II we have experienced a period of succeeding booms and recessions, with overall growth rates for the major capitalist nations which were well within (and sometimes below) historical norms.

Equally important, the idea of a post-war boom period is the cornerstone of the Mandelian theory of "neocapitalism." Like Mandel, the SLL/WL links this "boom" to inflation caused by government deficit spending, i.e., Keynesianism; and like Mandel, Healy/Wohlforth believe that this is/was a period in which the bourgeoisie is successfully able to grant reforms substantially benefitting the working class. Trotsky insisted this was impossible during the epoch of decaying capitalism, and concluded that reform demands were inadequate and had to be replaced with transitional demands which point to the only real solution for the working class, socialist revolution. For Mandel and Healy/Wohlforth it was not only the law of value which was suspended in the neo-reformist period of the "boom"—it was also the Transitional Program. (And now, with the "final crisis" at hand, transitional demands are likewise unnecessary, since wage demands are revolutionary according to the WL.)

### The Crisis of Leadership

The post-war stabilization of capitalism was not, as the WL claims, the result of the Bretton Woods monetary agreement of 1944, but rather the product of the tremendous destruction of capital accomplished by World War II and the defeat, due to the absence of revolutionary leadership, of the general strikes and revolutionary upheavals which swept the European working class after the war. These upheavals could have meant the end, not only of a period of stabilization, but of capitalism itself. They were defeated because of the betrayals of the Stalinists (and the Pabloists). Thus the question of economic stability in the imperialist epoch is fundamentally a *political* question, or as Trotsky put it, the fundamental crisis in this epoch is the crisis of proletarian leadership.

In Trotsky's "Report on the World Economic Crisis and the New Tasks of the Communist International" to the Third Congress of the CI, he began not with the expansion of credit (which accompanies every boom), but with the defeats of the European revolution which laid the basis for a temporary period of capitalist recovery. As for the myth of the "final crisis," in the same speech Trotsky comments:

"So long as capitalism is not overthrown by the proletarian revolution, it will continue to live in cycles, swinging up and down. Crises and booms were inherent in capitalism at its very birth; they will accompany it to its grave.... It might be asked whether the great struggles over wages...will automatically lead to the world revolution, to the final civil war and the conquest of political power.... We have no automatic guarantees of development."

After the Congress, Trotsky wrote concerning the controversy with the proponents of the "theory of the offensive":

"There was a rather indefinite grouping whose contention it was that the commercial and industrial crisis—and it

was extremely acute—...constituted the final crisis of capitalist society, and that this final crisis of capitalist society would inexorably worsen right up to the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat. This conception of the revolution is completely non-Marxist, non-scientific, mechanistic."

—The First Five Years of the Communist International, Vol. II, p. 60

In contrast to the monetary crank theories of the SLL/WL, and in answer to Wohlforth's absurd charge that the SL does not recognize any changes since 1914, at the sixth class Spartacist League National Chairman James Robertson read the opening paragraph of the current SL perspectives document as an example of a *Marxist* evaluation of the current period:

"1. The tasks facing the Spartacist League and the capacity of the SL as a revolutionary Marxist organization have both been qualitatively transformed through an interacting process. The crisis and breakdown of the post-World War II configuration of the world capitalist system, dominated by American imperialism, has been marked by the catastrophic consequences of the American involvement in Vietnam, the French general strike of 1968 and the definitive collapse of the 'American century' with Nixon's new fiscal and economic policies, which mark the forced abdication by the U.S. of the role of world policeman and the reversion of American imperialism to merely the strongest of several competing units. These developments have of course also been conditioned and paralleled by the political decomposition of the deformed workers state bloc, above all the Russia/China split."

—Memorandum to the CC on the Transformation of the SL," *Marxist Bulletin* No. 9, Part III

### Philosophical Objectivism and Political Opportunism

The most striking characteristic of the Workers League since its very inception as a tendency has been its constant shifting of positions. When talk is cheap the WL affects a principled Trotskyist stand, but when it smells a chance for an opportunist link-up then principles are thrown out the window (or, more accurately, shelved to be used again next month) as they rush to support the existing more powerful forces—Healy, SWP majority, black nationalism, the labor bureaucracy, French popular front, etc. It is the constant gyrating that we refer to in calling them "political bandits."

Yet beneath the grotesque zig-zags, an underlying *method* can be discerned. It was the exposition of this method that highlighted the recent NYC class series. After hours of obfuscating verbiage about an abstract "fight for dialectics" (the purpose of which is to avoid any consideration of *program*), Wohlforth felt constrained to demonstrate the consistency of supporting Mao Tse-tung, Ho Chi Minh, Mujibur Rahman, Huey Newton, Stanley Hill and James Morrissey and ignoring the Transitional Program in the trade unions. In doing so he revealed the heart of Healyite "theory" as philosophical objectivism, the belief that the overwhelming economic crisis eliminates the crisis of leadership: wages are a revolutionary issue and Meany/Abel are an adequate leadership.

It is this objectivism that permits Wohlforth to give political support to, for instance, the Vietnamese Stalinists with the justification that "*objective conditions*" have "forced [them] into a fight with imperialism under conditions where *there can be no compromise*" [emphasis in original] (*Bulletin*, 14 May 1973).

As Pablo in the early 1950's launched his campaign to liquidate the Trotskyist movement into the Stalinist parties, he made clear the role of philosophical objectivism as the fundamental justification for the abandonment of the principles and program of the Fourth International. The "Theses on International Perspectives" of the "Third Congress of the FI" (1951) states:

"The objective conditions determine in the long run the character and dynamic

## Continued from page 7 Early Communist Work in the Trade Unions

of the trade-union bureaucracy is possible. All bureaucrats, at all times, are for "trade-union democracy," but when Fitzpatrick split with the Communists in 1923, in order to go back to Gompers, he had to *reverse* himself on everything he had been saying previously, opposing amalgamation, Soviet recognition and independent working-class politics. This he did with a vengeance throughout the labor movement, becoming a virulent anti-communist and aid to Gompers' reactionary drive.

This drive gained momentum as prosperity and relative capitalist stabilization set in after 1923. The break with Fitzpatrick left the Communists without substantial allies in the labor movement. The TUEL had grown explosively, as had the W(C)P, especially during 1922, but the ranks lacked an experienced cadre to hold them together, and the party, having let the earlier wave of mass upsurge pass it by, was not firmly rooted in the workers movement. The TUEL was branded a "dual union" and virtually driven underground by the end of 1924 through a wave of expulsions of its militants from the unions.

### Stalinism Perverts the TUEL

In 1923, with the illness of Lenin and the defeat of the abortive revolution in Germany, a triumvirate of Kamenev, Zinoviev and Stalin took political control in the Soviet Union and began to twist the CI into an agent of the foreign policy of the new Soviet bureaucracy. This turned the trade-union work of the Communist Parties, as it did all other political questions, into footballs for unprincipled factional warfare in which *renunciation* of previously-held views became the standard for acceptance by the international leadership. Thus the Passaic strike of 1926, which was led by Communists, was at first backed by the Ruthenberg leadership of the party as a factional ploy directed against Foster and the TUEL, but it was dropped later by all factions when a shift in the line of the CI to the right (Stalin's first move against the "left"-leaning Zinoviev) indicated a revival of work through the TUEL rather than directly by the Communist Party.

The TUEL was continued by the CP until 1928 (when it was transformed into a "third period" dual-unionist organization). During the late 1920's, the program of the TUEL degenerated, under the influence of the new leadership of the CI, into one which turned the united-front *tactic* into a *strategy*. As dictated by an Executive Committee of the CI (ECCI) resolution on the American question in 1927, the TUEL program was to consist of five watered-down points: organize the unorganized,

of the mass movement which, taken to a certain level, can overcome all the subjective obstacles in the path of the revolution. This conception continues to be the base of our revolutionary optimism and clarifies our attitude towards the Communist parties."

—*Quatrième Internationale*, August-September 1951

It is this theory which is characteristic of Pabloism in all its variants. But Pabloism itself is only a "theoretical" justification for something far more fundamental: the abject fear of the petty bourgeois faced with the task of leading the proletariat in struggle for socialist revolution, and the resulting overpowering desire to find shelter in the warm embrace of the traditional leaders of the working class, the agents of the bourgeoisie and the most direct expression of *what is*, as opposed to *what will be*. ■

for trade-union democracy, amalgamation, a labor party and "an aggressive struggle against the capitalists." The resolution called, in effect, for bringing "all progressives willing to fight against the policies of the reactionaries" into the TUEL. The dividing line between the TUEL member and the temporary ally was completely obliterated.

In order to cover up this obliteration and firm up the Stalinist conception of the left-center coalition as a permanent strategy, Foster purposefully blurred the original distinction in his later writings (Foster, *American Trade Unionism*, 1947). In order to do this, he relied on his earlier references to the TUEL as a united front (one of which was quoted, unfortunately without comment, in *WV* No. 18, April 1973). The TUEL had not *been*, in fact, a united front, but a membership organization of Communist trade unionists and others designed to bring the Communist program into the trade unions. It *carried out* united-front alliances with other elements. As such it was politically identical to trade-union caucuses supported by the Spartacist League today, though organizationally pan-union instead of limited to a particular union.

A united front, on the other hand, is a bloc on the basis of the immediate interests of the workers, designed to unite the working class as a whole against the capitalists. While the united front can take many forms (a temporary alliance, a trade union, or, at the highest stage, a soviet), in no case is it the same as, or a substitute for, the intervention of the vanguard party with its program into the workers movement. This is precisely the distinction that Foster and the Stalinist Communist Party blurred over. Foster tried to give the impression that the entire program of the TUEL had always been to bloc with "progressives" around the demands of the big campaigns, and

### Class Struggle in the National Maritime Union

Speaker: GENE HERSON  
Organizer,  
Militant-Solidarity Caucus

NMU presidential candidate discusses the fight for a class-struggle alternative to the bureaucrats and reformist labor fakers in the trade unions.

23 June St. Gregory's  
7:30 P.M. Church  
New York City 144 W.90th St.

equated the functioning of the W(C)P and TUEL in the 1922-24 period with the functioning of his earlier independent group of trade-union militants:

"The organized forces behind this big TUEL movement [1922 campaigns] took the form of a broad united front of left wingers and progressives. The Communist Party and the TUEL were the driving left-wing forces, while the progressives, chiefly the Fitzpatrick-Nockels Farmer-Labor Party group, co-operated sympathetically. It was essentially a continuation and growth of the combination that had carried through the packinghouse and steel campaigns."

—From *Bryan to Stalin*, 1936

Thus Foster's conclusion was that there was no difference between a bloc which dropped the political program in order to appease the most reactionary elements and a bloc based on a section of the program of the CI, while the full program was simultaneously carried into the unions by the TUEL itself throughout the duration of the bloc. What this meant for CP trade-union work after the Stalinist degeneration was obvious: get the best bloc you can, but bloc at any price.

### For a Political Alternative

The CP's turn to dual unionism in 1928 was a betrayal which not only pulled the rug out completely from under the bulk of its trade-union work at the time, but also helped ensure that reactionary reformists—such as John

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# Early Communist Work in the Trade Unions

L. Lewis of the UMW—would retain leadership of the labor movement through the period of organization of the mass of unskilled workers. Foster fully endorsed not only this turn but every subsequent betrayal of the CP, including the World War II no-strike pledge.

When Lewis and others organized the CIO—precisely to prevent the rise of revolutionary leadership!—an important change took place in the manner of capitalist rule and labor discipline. Strikes which earlier would have been met with police, troops, shootings and jailings were now dealt with through the mediation of the trade-union bureaucracy, which guaranteed labor discipline in return for periodic favors.

The CIO drive took trade unionism to its limits in its ability to solve outstanding social questions such as unemployment and made the need for a working-class *political* perspective more obviously necessary. The CIO bureaucrats and their CP allies therefore had the task of heading off and tying to the bourgeoisie the incipient political motion of the workers, which arose at this time chiefly in the form of a movement for a labor party. This they did through passing off a class-collaborationist bloc with the liberal bourgeoisie (the "popular front") as a "working-class" strategy. The bureaucracy's task of betrayal was completed through the subordination of the unions to the imperialist Second World War in exchange for increased recognition by the companies and the government.

Since the basic trade-union tasks were thus accomplished under reformist leadership, the main organizational task of the revolutionists in the trade unions changed from that of providing revolutionary leadership in trade-union

international corporate migration, etc.), all of which are determined by the global relationship of class forces and inter-imperialist rivalries. Yet precisely because of this contradiction, union leaderships are more and more dependent on outside political forces. For any trade-union leader or would-be leader who bases himself on anything less than the program and struggle of the international proletariat, there is very quickly no alternative other than reliance on a section of the liberal bourgeoisie.

The only alternative to the capitulation to imperialism which this necessarily entails is the viewpoint of the international proletariat, and this is expressed only by the Transitional Program and the effort to rebuild the Trotskyist world vanguard party. Thus only a leadership based on the full Transitional Program can be fully prepared to meet all questions and turn the unions from the disciplinary agents of an ever predatory imperialism into true weapons of the working class in its international struggle against capitalism. ■

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# "Progressive" Bridges Announces No-Strike Agreement

icism of Bridges by the CP, the symbiotic relationship of Bridges as the "progressive" bureaucrat and the CP as the "left," which sells out its supposed program in order to make a deal, continues. The CP's West Coast paper, *People's World*, took the same position as the *Dispatcher* on the warehouse convention's dumping of the no-strike provisions: no mention. If it's not compatible with the maintenance of capitalism, Bridges and the CP agree, it must be shelved "until the conditions are ripe," i.e., forever.

The CP seeks to win piecemeal reforms from capitalism through pressure on the liberal wing of the bourgeoisie, in alliance with the labor bureaucracy. When the debate at the warehouse convention turned to a proposal for "30 for 40," the CP supporters again covered for the bureaucracy, pointing out that while the concept was important, it was not on the order of the day. One CP supporter asked plaintively, "Harry, why don't you and Lou [Goldblatt] get together with Hoffa and Smith and Woodcock and lead the fight for 30 for 40?"

During the 1972 election campaign, not *once* did CP supporters in the ILWU speak on behalf of the CP's candidates or explain that the problems facing longshoremen can be solved only through socialism, beginning with a break from the two capitalist parties. The CP supporters ceased all criticism of McGovern after the primaries, despite the latter's vote not only for the original appropriations of the Vietnam war, but also for wage controls and the compulsory arbitration bill imposed on longshoremen to force an end to the strike! Their policy of no criticism of the Democrats aided the open endorsement of McGovern by the ILWU bureaucracy.

## Bankruptcy of Maoist Reformism

Supporters of the other ostensibly revolutionary organizations, trapped in the same conception of caving in to the liberals and "progressive" trade-union bureaucrats in order to fight the "main enemy," are equally lacking in an alternative to the left-talking fakers such as Bridges, and have thus failed

to make much headway against the CP in the ILWU. The supporters of the Maoist Revolutionary Union (RU), like the CP, collapsed on the no-strike provisions when the bureaucracy counterattacked. They then proceeded to endorse a bureaucratic compromise to reduce the union probation period for new members from 90 to 30 days, instead of calling for its elimination altogether. Like the CP-supported elements, RU supporters operate haphazardly in the ILWU and lack any perspective of a caucus based on a full program of political answers for the needs of longshoremen.

One supporter of Venceremos, a Maoist group currently undergoing state persecution in California, distinguished himself from the rest of the left in the fall, 1972 union elections by running as an open revolutionist. He did better than RU and CP supporters running for comparable posts on the Local 6 exec board, since they in no way distinguished themselves programmatically from the left wing of the bureaucracy. Yet Venceremos as well lacks a consistent caucus perspective and opposes the raising of transitional demands such as a labor party and political strikes against the government wage freeze, which could bridge the gap between the present level of trade-union struggle and the larger, real needs of longshoremen. Venceremos is thus reduced to the same trap of a "minimum-maximum" program which conditions the approach of RU and CP supporters: the "minimum" of reformist trade-union points is in reality the only real program because there is no way of initiating struggle to reach the "maximum" of revolution.

Another opposition group, supported by various radical tendencies and individuals, publishes *Longshore Victory*, which does not even pretend to have a "maximum" program but simply calls for a shorter workweek in order to get "our just share of the extra profits that the shipowners have been able to provide for themselves through mechanization of the operation" (*Longshore Victory*, October 1972). The Longshore Victory group consciously refrains from attacking the union leadership directly. The paper is thus a mild "left" pressure on the bureaucracy on economic questions, completely ignoring the fundamental class-collaborationist role of the bureaucracy and its link with the Democratic Party.

## Role of the Teamsters

The bureaucracy of the two-million member Teamsters Union, now in an openly anti-labor alliance with Nixon involving an all-out assault on the Farmworkers Union (UFW) in California, continues to figure prominently in the affairs of the ILWU as it has throughout the history of the longshore union. The Longshore Division of the ILWU continues in a jurisdictional conflict with the Teamsters over container-stuffing. Both union leaderships approach the question from the narrow standpoint of protecting their own par-

ticular power base rather than from the standpoint of the interests of all workers involved. Container-stuffing remains 60 percent unorganized.

The warehouse division, meanwhile, has been engaged in joint bargaining with the Teamsters warehouse division. This alliance is an uneasy marriage of convenience. Since the 1930's, when warehousemen left the Teamsters to join the ILWU, the Teamsters have raided the ILWU incessantly. This continued into the Cold War period, when the Teamsters used red-baiting and mobster tactics to drive the ILWU from Midwest and Gulf ports. In 1959, finding himself expelled from the CIO, Hoffa led the Teamsters into joint warehouse bargaining with Bridges, who found the extra strength very useful, since he had already agreed to virtually automate away the longshore division.

The Teamster alliance is useful to the Bridges bureaucracy for another reason. Militant proposals by ILWU warehousemen, such as elimination of the no-strike clauses, can be conveniently eliminated or watered down on the grounds that the Teamsters would never stand for them. This extends to proposals to militantly defend the longshoremen, so that Bridges not only keeps longshoremen divided against Teamsters, but longshoremen divided against ILWU warehousemen.

Bridges sought to bolster his position against the ranks through an actual merger with the Teamsters bureaucracy, after an attempt to merge with the reactionary ILA fell through largely because of rank-and-file resistance. It was obvious to the ILWU ranks that a Teamster-ILWU merger would have meant loss of key gains, including the hiring hall and the relatively democratic internal structure. Faced with strong rank-and-file opposition, Bridges dropped the idea, but the problems of jurisdictional conflict and joint bargaining remain. If the Teamsters finish off the UFW, and the ILWU continues its policy of catering to the conservative influence of the Teamsters, the Teamsters will gradually weaken and destroy the ILWU. This became clear at the ILWU international convention, which followed the warehouse convention. Despite longtime friendship of the ILWU and the Farmworkers, the Bridges bureaucracy managed by a close margin to sabotage any direct criticism of the Teamsters and refused to invite Cesar Chavez to address the convention.

## For a Militant Transport Merger

In considering merger proposals, whether with the Teamsters or the maritime unions, militants must raise a class-struggle program which protects the established gains and *advances* the interests of the ranks rather than retarding them. This can be done only on the basis of struggle against the bureaucracy for the interests of all workers in the struggle against capitalism, not—as the pseudo-Trotskyist Workers League proposes—on the basis of unconditionally backing any and every bureaucratic merger proposal. When

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struggles—as the Trotskyists had exemplified in the Minneapolis strikes of 1934—to that of providing a *political* alternative to the reformist bureaucracy. This was recognized by Trotsky in his codification of the Transitional Program in 1938.

If this was true in the late 1930's, now more than ever the character of the period requires a full political program in the trade unions. The important difference from earlier periods is not the *subjective* factors such as lower consciousness—the fruits of past defeats and betrayals—but the *objective* condition that trade unionism *must* be either the direct tool of capitalist imperialism in its new drive to discipline the work force for international competition and new wars, or the revolutionary instrument of the international proletariat. There can be no middle road between these alternatives, as Trotsky insisted in "Trade Unions in the Epoch of Imperialist Decay" (1940).

The line is drawn ever more sharply: individual unions are less and less able to cope with the problems that confront them (inflation, layoffs, national and

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# Continued from page 1 Watergate...

in the fall of 1969" (*New York Times*, 20 May 1973).

Such methods are, we repeat, nothing new. The FBI has for decades used spies and provocateurs in various radical groups. (For that matter, the "guardians of law and order" have also systematically blackmailed leading bourgeois politicians, which is one of the reasons no one, not even the liberal Kennedy, ever got rid of Hoover.) During the late 1960's the Justice Department set up a special section devoted exclusively to "getting the Panthers." Leading Black Panther Party members were acquitted of charges in a series of trials, several of which were obvious frame-ups. In foreign operations by the U.S. government, "dirty tricks" and

covert activities are the norm. Earlier this year newspapers reported that the CIA trained, equipped and financed the Tibetan rebellion of the late 1950's. Now the newspapers announce that two of the Watergate conspirators, Hunt and Barker, were also high-level organizers of the "Bay of Pigs" invasion of Cuba.

Less commonly known is the role of the CIA in the labor movement. For more than two decades the government has financed the AFL-CIO's "American Institute for Free Labor Development" and surreptitiously financed conservative and Catholic trade unions in a number of South American and Asian countries (including Vietnam). In Western Europe after World War II, the CIA (operating through UAW leader Victor Reuther) helped finance and organize anti-communist, social-democratic trade unions which split away from the CP-led labor federations in France and Italy. Another important conduit of CIA funds was the Communications Workers

Bridges sought merger with the ILA, the WL opportunistically tailed after: "affiliation of the two unions is absolutely required" (*Bulletin*, 10 January 1972). When that merger fell through and Bridges went to the Teamsters, the WL obediently tagged along (*Bulletin*, 22 January 1973).

The CP-backed *Transport Worker*, a newsletter claiming to speak for seamen, longshoremen, teamsters, airline, railroad, warehouse and allied workers, likewise offers no alternative. It simply proposes joint contract bargaining between all these unions, backing down before the hostility of the ILWU ranks to merger with the ILA and Teamsters, saying these proposals "did not serve unity" (*Transport Worker*, 2 April 1973).

In order to be supportable, any proposal for merger must include at least: 1) a guarantee of no losses of jobs, conditions or other gains by any of the workers involved, and the extension of these gains, through parity proposals, to the other workers in the unity move; 2) a guarantee of full union democracy within the combined union; and 3) a specific repudiation of union-busting as in the Teamster attempt to destroy the UFW, coupled with a real drive by the combined strength of transport workers to help organize the unorganized through "hot-cargoing" (refusing to handle) struck goods. Such a proposal must be accompanied as well by specific demands that the leaders of the unions involved immediately cease all cooperation with government wage-freezing boards and other agencies: Fitzsimmons off the "Advisory Committee" and "Labor Peace" commission, and Bridges off the San Francisco Port Commission! Such a merger

proposal would expose the Bridges leadership (as well as the Fitzsimmons and Gleason groups) by insisting on a complete reversal of ILWU policy.

## Establish Militant Caucuses

Such gains cannot be achieved, however, without the establishment of a revolutionary leadership to fight consistently for them and for similar policies to meet the needs of longshore, warehouse and other transport workers. These questions are not limited to the immediate trade-union issues, but are posed in a broader context. Thus the question of jobs and automation requires a consistent struggle for shorter hours at no loss in pay together with elimination of steady men and of second-class status for "B" men, and full restoration of the hiring hall. But these gains will never be secure without a commitment to struggle for the same gains for East and Gulf Coast, Mexican and Canadian longshoremen, and for transport workers throughout the world.

Similarly, the question of companies "running away" to take advantage of low-paid foreign labor poses a clear class choice: either patriotic pressure on the bourgeoisie to institute severe protectionist measures, leading inevitably to higher prices, trade war and eventual third world war in which the world's workers slaughter each other for the profits of "their" exploiters; or an internationalist commitment to organizing and raising the living standards of foreign workers. Longshoremen are in a key position to stop the flow of scab products, aid international organizing drives and to lead political strikes against acts of imperialist aggression and war. If capitalists such as Hawaiian pineapple growers say they can no longer produce at a profit and must therefore shut down production, thereby wasting vast productive capacity and destroying jobs, the demand for expropriation of the industry under workers control must be raised.

Inflation, wage controls, anti-labor legal measures and other attacks on labor mounted jointly by the two capitalist parties also pose a class choice: either pressure the bourgeoisie for a few crumbs by supporting Democrats, sitting on wage-freeze boards, etc., all of which means a complete surrendering of militant strike struggles; or fighting back by using the strike weapon, including general strikes against particular abuses. This means not only refusing to support capitalist politicians or sit on government agencies, but struggling to oust the bureaucrats who base themselves on such betrayals; it means building a workers party to abolish capitalism and establish a workers republic.

A caucus to fight for the leadership of the ILWU must be built on the basis of the *working-class* answers to all these problems and choices, i.e., on the interests of the international proletariat. ■

of America led by cold warrior Joseph Beirne.

The Watergate affair is not a harbinger of impending Bonapartism or fascism, as many left liberals and some fake-socialist groups have maintained. As we indicated in an earlier article:

"There is no doubt about Nixon's appetites for a strong state, which could raise itself above the control of the various factions of the ruling class, achieving a *relative* independence in order to better control and if necessary smash the workers and socialist movements. If any proof were needed, it could be found in his proposal to reintroduce the death penalty, the bills to abolish strikes in the transportation industries, the proposed laws to prevent union memberships from voting on contracts, the expansion of the FBI, the attempts to muzzle the bourgeois press, the use of espionage against the Democrats and countless other examples.

"But Nixon does not completely control the context in which he operates. Appetites are not enough. Thus on Watergate he has effectively been stymied by the liberal outcry and defections in his own ranks. His new doctrine of unlimited 'executive privilege' to ignore Congress has apparently been temporarily shelved. Similarly, while his wage-control program may have been motivated by a desire to break the unions, the results have not gone beyond the limits of traditional bourgeois democracy."

—"Watergate Scandal Shocks Liberals," *WV* No. 19, 27 April 1973

## Impeachment?

Obviously Nixon is directly responsible for the whole Watergate affair and the subsequent cover-up attempts. This has been clear since last summer. Yet noticeably the Democratic powers in Congress did nothing to raise Watergate during the presidential campaign, despite the fact that this issue alone might have defeated Nixon. The reason was quite simple: not only was a vast majority of the bourgeoisie supporting the Nixon government, but so were many congressional Democrats who felt their power threatened by the "reform" McGovern. The South Dakota senator was only useful as a good spoiler to draw off steam from various protest movements. Moreover, Nixon had made some solid achievements for his class: trade with China and Russia, cutting down U.S. involvement in Vietnam, new markets for trade and capital expansion. In this context, Watergate was just a pinprick.

But Mr. Nixon's appetites and the interests of the ruling class are not always identical. Congressional hackles began to rise after Nixon announced his new doctrine of executive privilege. The recent call for a "New Atlantic Charter" was also a blunder, since it was based on memories of U.S. dominance in days gone by and not on the present realities of growing trade competition. Similarly, the government management of inflation was bungled this spring, with money supplies being expanded at an annual rate of more than thirteen percent in recent months.

So the Congressional leaders struck back at Nixon with the Watergate hearings. A combination of inter-bureaucratic rivalries (CIA vs. FBI) and inept handling of the affair by the Administration led to the unforeseen eventuality of several of the key participants' actually telling (part of) what they knew. And so the scandal has snowballed, until much of official Washington has now been covered by the web of intrigue.

However, such matters can easily reach a point of no return, and influential sections of the bourgeoisie are now trying to calm the waters. In an important editorial the *Wall Street Journal* (9 May 1973) discussed the question of impeachment, noting that it is one thing to get rid of Haldeman and Ehrlichman:

"Toppling a President is quite another. . . . It would be wise to think about where the momentum is taking us. . . . Impeachment is the gravest possible constitutional action, a last resort when there is no other way to salvage the system itself. . . . When you damage the President you also risk damaging the nation."

Echoing the desire of the bourgeoisie for stability at all costs, the bureaucrats of the deformed workers states have played down the Watergate crisis in the press and are doing what they can to shore up Nixon. Thus while Chinese diplomats are circulating in Western Europe trying to convince the capitalists to keep NATO (as a weapon against Russia), the Russian party chief Brezhnev will visit Nixon in the U.S. this month, an act that again confirms Moscow's political support for the present administration.

It is possible that impeachment could prove to be necessary for the ruling class (as the *Journal* admits), but given the precarious economic and monetary situation, the delicate maneuvering necessary for U.S. foreign policy in this period and Spiro Agnew (enough said), impeachment would certainly have to be a last resort. However, in the absence of a mass revolutionary workers movement, even impeachment would only lead to a restabilization of bourgeois democracy.

## Build a Workers Party! Strike Against the Wage Freeze!

For socialists to call today for impeachment of Nixon can only mean a desire to have another *bourgeois* ruler, whether Agnew or a liberal Democrat. Bourgeois rule will not disappear by crumbling to dust under the weight of its own contradictions. It must be smashed by a massive, organized and conscious movement of the working class. Today such a movement is only beginning to be built. To pretend otherwise, to believe that "after Nixon-us" can only have the practical result of falling in behind the liberals in their desperate effort to shore up the moral authority of a bankrupt and rotting regime. To call for impeachment at a time when a real alternative to the discredited government of the bosses is rule by the working class organized in its own class institutions and using its own means—that is "quite another" story. But to pretend today that the arch-reactionary Meany bureaucracy of the AFL-CIO could offer a meaningful alternative to the rule of its capitalist masters in the absence of a mass labor upsurge is to totally gut the Trotskyist labor party slogan of any semblance of revolutionary content.

The only real answer to the corruption and murder of bourgeois politics is to build a workers party that offers a real alternative, one which fights for a workers government that would destroy the capitalist system itself. The most concrete way that this can be done today is through building the Spartacist League and constructing caucuses in the trade unions which will fight the labor bureaucracy down the line with a class-struggle program of transitional demands pointing the way toward socialist revolution.

The mass of the working class is not yet won to communist consciousness, but is nonetheless faced immediately with the current wave of inflation, the wage-control legislation, the threatened recession, etc. As a first step in fighting back against capitalist exploitation, a determined struggle to smash the wage freeze through political strikes directed explicitly against government wage controls is a burning issue in every union. With contracts due among Teamsters, electrical workers, auto workers and others, and with the current disorganization of a government discredited by Watergate, the failure to take up this absolutely necessary struggle can only mean guaranteeing a defeat for the working class in a context where victory would be not only possible but highly likely.

The present leadership of the unions opposes this perspective for a clear reason: such a perspective opens the road to a direct political confrontation between the working class and the capitalist government and thereby threatens the very existence of the "labor lieutenants of the capitalist class." Thus the fight to smash the wage controls must be part of a broader struggle to construct a new leadership of the working class. ■

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**WORKERS VANGUARD**

# "Progressive" Bridges Announces No-Strike Agreement

## Ranks Restive as ILWU Contracts Expire

OAKLAND, Calif.—Having lost its absolute dominance of the world capitalist market, the U.S. ruling class is seeking to improve its competitive position by intensifying the exploitation of American workers. This requires enlisting the aid of the reformist trade-union bureaucracy to ensure a narrow, nationalistic response and labor peace. The "socialist" bureaucracy of Harry Bridges and Co. of the International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union (ILWU) on the West Coast docks is no exception.

Following the lead of I.W. Abel of the Steelworkers, who recently negotiated a special four-year no-strike pact in the steel industry (see *WV* No. 20, 11 May 1973), on 11 May Bridges announced a tentative agreement with the Pacific Maritime Association (PMA) on a plan to avoid a repeat of the 134-day 1971-72 longshore strike when ILWU contracts expire on 1 June (warehouse) and 1 July (longshore). The stated purpose of the agreement is to assure shippers and their clients that they could continue to route goods through West Coast ports, since some companies have already laid plans to divert cargo to East and Gulf Coast ports in anticipation of a possible longshore strike. This gesture of class-collaboration came less than three months after the 500 delegates to the February convention of the warehouse section of the union had overwhelmingly rejected the no-strike provisions of the contract and in other ways indicated their militancy and dissatisfaction with the international leadership.

## Bridges Prepares Defeat

The four-point "preliminary" settlement proposal grants a meager 25 cent per hour raise and vague promises of "no layoffs" and guaranteed pay. With the PMA and the union predicting another 50 percent decline in the port of San Francisco in the next five years, however, a "no layoff" promise is meaningless, particularly in light of Bridges' past "achievements." These include the 1961 and 1966 "modernization and mechanization" agreements, two five-year no-strike contracts which laid the basis for the present crisis by giving away jobs through speed-up and containerization, and undermining of the union hiring hall by introducing "steady men" (Section 9.43 of the contract). Steady men work regularly for one employer, rather than being assigned to jobs through the regular union hiring hall, the major achievement of the 1934 San Francisco general strike (see *WV* No. 6, March 1972).

The PMA saved \$900 million in labor costs for the companies over the past decade through these advantages under Bridges' contracts. In the past six years, 1,500 men left the docks, mostly because they could no longer live on two to four days of work per week. The crisis extends to the warehouse division, which comprises over half of the 65,000 union members. Runaway shops have moved to non-union areas in California, Nevada and the South.

Furthermore, the union's Hawaii sugar and pineapple local of 23,000 is being undermined by such international U.S. giants as Dole, Libby and Del Monte moving operations to Taiwan, the Philippines and Kenya. Already unemployment on Molokai is 21 percent. By 1975, pineapple production in Hawaii will be virtually eliminated, on the basis of exploitation of workers making 10 to 17 cents per hour! While carefully avoiding patriotic- or chauvinist-sounding remarks, the "leftist" ILWU

bureaucrats nevertheless put forth the same protectionist proposals supported by the AFL-CIO and all other sections of the trade-union bureaucracy: keep low-grade pineapple out by enforcing FDA standards, establish quotas and "realistic duties" on foreign products and make runaways grant adequate pensions and severance pay, with transfer rights for the workers on the few remaining plantations. Instead only a militant program of immediate strikes against layoffs and a truly internationalist commitment to organizing the unorganized and raising living standards of foreign workers is sufficient to actually solve this problem.

## Bridges Betrays Vietnamese Workers and Peasants

The 1971-72 strike only made matters worse for the ILWU. Bridges, along with Gleason of the ILA, did everything possible to avoid a nationwide docks shutdown. Despite being directed by the delegated Coast-Wide Caucus of the Longshore Division to negotiate the issue of steady men as a coast-wide issue, Bridges designated it a port issue. This left members of Local 10 (Bay Area) completely isolated in their fight against the "steady men" provision (Section 9.43) in an area which has the second most containerized port in the world, and consequently a large percentage of steady men.

Furthermore, Bridges continued the shipment of military goods for the Vietnam war throughout the strike, demonstrating the total hypocrisy of his "anti-war" position and his contempt for the union's demand of "immediate withdrawal." In one blow longshoremen could have seriously impaired U.S. imperialism's ability to conduct the war; the bureaucracy instead played on demoralization and didn't even consider embargoing war materiel. Bridges also failed to close Canadian and Mexican ports during the strike, except briefly when the strike was almost over.

The final contract accepted the loss of longshore jobs by calling for a tax on containers not stuffed by longshoremen and a "guaranteed pay" system which provided much less for the second-class "B" men than for "A" men (full book members), thereby sharpening this destructive division among longshoremen. The "guaranteed pay" proved virtually impossible to collect anyway under the complicated provisions! The sellout contract was made even worse when the Pay Board slashed 30 cents from the settlement.

Hypocrisy has been the only difference between Bridges' role and that of his brother bureaucrats Meany, Woodcock, Fitzsimmons, etc., who joined Nixon's Pay Board and now grace his "Advisory Committee" to the Cost-of-Living Council. Rather than call on them to resign from the Pay Board, the "militant" Bridges spread rumors that they had promised strike action if the Board reduced his settlement. When the Pay Board announced the cut, he meekly accepted it with hardly a murmur of protest.

Furthermore, the container tax settlement was ruled illegal by a federal judge in an NLRB suit in May 1972. Bridges accepted this also. To top it off, when Nixon "removed" wage controls in January 1973, the ILWU re-applied for the 30 cents, only to be rejected by the Cost-of-Living Council. Again Bridges did nothing!

Despite past betrayals, Bridges is still able to lend a left cover of sorts to the current no-strike offensive. Tried and almost deported five times in 21 years for "communism," Bridges heads one of only two major CIO unions that refused to expel communists in the late 1940's and survived (the other, the

UE, was badly split). When the president of the Hawaii sugar and pineapple local was convicted under the Smith Act in 1952, the ILWU responded with a three-day Hawaii-wide general strike. Bridges spends a great deal of effort scraping the tarnish from his "militant" image. Thus after the 1972 strike sell-out, he and other longshore leaders personally marched on public employee picket lines at the University of California, mobilized 1,100 people to stage a brief sit-in in support of striking



Harry Bridges, February 1957.

department-store workers, conspicuously opposed the anti-farmworker Proposition 22 and condemned the murder of black students in Louisiana. With these gestures of militancy and "socialist" rhetoric, the Bridges leadership tries to mask its real intent: to continue tying the workers to the needs of capitalism.

## Warehouse Convention Dumps No-strike Provisions

At the February convention of warehouse Locals 6 and 17, the leadership continued its policies of containing rank-and-file militancy, but the membership demonstrated its resistance by electing a relatively youthful, racially representative and militant delegate body. The delegates moved to eliminate Sections 3.1, 3.3 and 19.3, which prohibit strikes over speed-up, compulsory overtime, safety conditions, etc., and require that such grievances be arbitrated. The leadership vigorously opposed this dumping of the no-strike provisions in the contract. (This was simply a continuation of the betrayals of the past year, during which warehouse business agents in Oakland have sought to dissipate militant job actions at locations such as Thrifty's, Bell Brand and Associated Foods.)

This vote was an important blow

against the reformist trade-union bureaucracy, which is key to the capitalists' strategy, particularly in a year in which contracts for over five million workers expire. The ruling class is fearful that under the pressure of runaway inflation, deteriorating working conditions and the decline in real wages, the militancy of individual strikes could lead to an all-out assault on wage controls, possibly culminating in the demand for a general strike to smash the freeze, as happened in Britain. Relying largely on rank-and-file demoralization over the previous round of strike encounters, which resulted in little or no real gains, the bureaucrats are using every stratagem this year to impress the workers with the necessity for a no-strike policy to save American capitalism from itself.

As soon as the vote against the no-strike provisions was taken, the bureaucracy began to counterattack in an attempt to defeat the vote surreptitiously. As currently formulated by McLain, Local 6 president, the warehouse locals are demanding a speed-up in the arbitration of grievances with the right to strike if the employer violates the grievance procedure (i.e., not over the grievances themselves). Equally revealing was the convention report in the ILWU paper, the *Dispatcher*, which completely omitted any mention of the dumping of the no-strike provisions. The *Dispatcher* was openly defeatist about the convention decisions:

"When it was all over, the delegates had worked out a fairly tall order—demanding a two-year contract with substantial increases in wages (50¢ each year), and big improvements in pensions, health and welfare, holidays and contract language."

—*Dispatcher*, 9 March 1973

Bridges might as well have called up the PMA and told them to simply forget about the "tall order" warehouse demands!

## The Role of the Communist Party

The response of the supporters of the supposedly revolutionary organizations in the ILWU served to bolster the pro-capitalist arguments of the leadership. While initially supporting the elimination of the no-strike clause, a move clearly popular with the membership, most of them lapsed into silence when the leadership counterattacked, and a few actively aided the bureaucracy. Contradicting his younger, more militant CP-influenced brothers, one supporter of the reformist Communist Party opposed eliminating the mandatory arbitration clause, saying, "The day we abolish mandatory arbitration is the day we tell the boss to get out of his seat." International Secretary-Treasurer Goldblatt took the cue, saying, "That's right. We can't win this fight now. When socialism is on the agenda, count me in. But you can't win socialism in one warehouse," he continued with a smirk, "You can't even win socialism in one industry." Therefore...you can't fight compulsory arbitration!

Historically Bridges has been the foremost spokesman for the CP position in labor officialdom. It was Bridges who ordered the moving of struck goods during the Montgomery Ward strike of 1944, in line with the CP's super-patriotic, pro-war position during World War II. This act did not distinguish him or the CP from the rest of the reactionary labor bureaucracy, but it was Bridges who was the chief spokesman for the extension of the no-strike pledge after the war.

Despite a recent falling out of old friends, expressed by some public criticism

continued on page 10