

Long March To Compromise

Fear of foot-soreness has forced PND to abandon plans to march to, from, or by the US Consulate. Or so some would have us believe. The three month back-track, from firm commitment to abdicating conscience, indicates much of the political nature of PND.

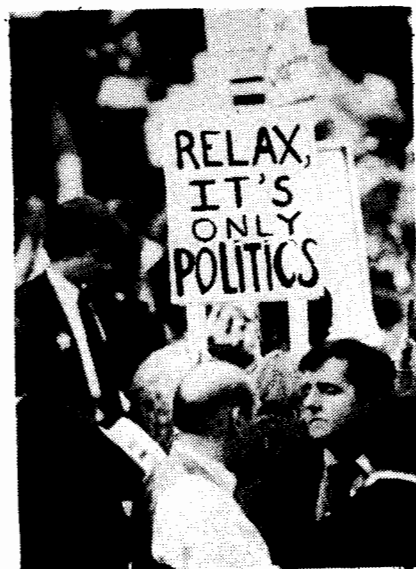
At the November General Meeting, PND resolved to march to or by the US consulate and also an appropriate Soviet establishment if available (which it wasn't). This reflected the dominant feeling of the meeting that a more political stance was necessary. Even the PND Convenor, Joe Camilleri, adamantly supported the proposition of politicisation.

In the light of this policy, three proposals for the march route put to the December 14 rally general meeting were significant.

First, a march north from Queen Victoria Gardens was proposed by a conglomerate of members of local groups in the eastern suburbs. This, in fact, misses the US consulate altogether, a fact well known to supporters of the proposals who put it forward as a deliberate attempt to depoliticize the march. That it arose indicates not necessarily anything about the support for nuclear disarmament among local group members but that most of these members, perhaps especially in the eastern suburbs, are not prepared to carry the struggle for nuclear disarmament beyond the measures that have been used in the past. It is just a little amusing to note that the supporters of this motion resisted pressure to drop it from those who feared that "the left", those who were committed to the march's politicisation, would turn it southwards to the US consulate.

The other two proposals were a march from the city to the US consulate (St. Kilda PND) supported by the "Lefts" and the now (in)famous radial march proposal which was effectively a compromise position. When it came to the voting, of course, the US Consulate march was vehemently opposed by both those wanting depoliticisation and those prepared to accept "compromise". The few raised hands for the radial march, which at last stood unopposed, indicated the spontaneous support it had gathered.

Then, in the formation of the Committees for the march's arms, the south arm, coming from the US consulate and BP House, was effectively sabotaged. The "apolitical" or even "anti-political" elements that the local groups are mostly composed of became in large part the membership of the Regional Rally Working Committees, at least in the South and East. The former fact meant that the majority of Southern Regional Working Committee (SRWC) looked

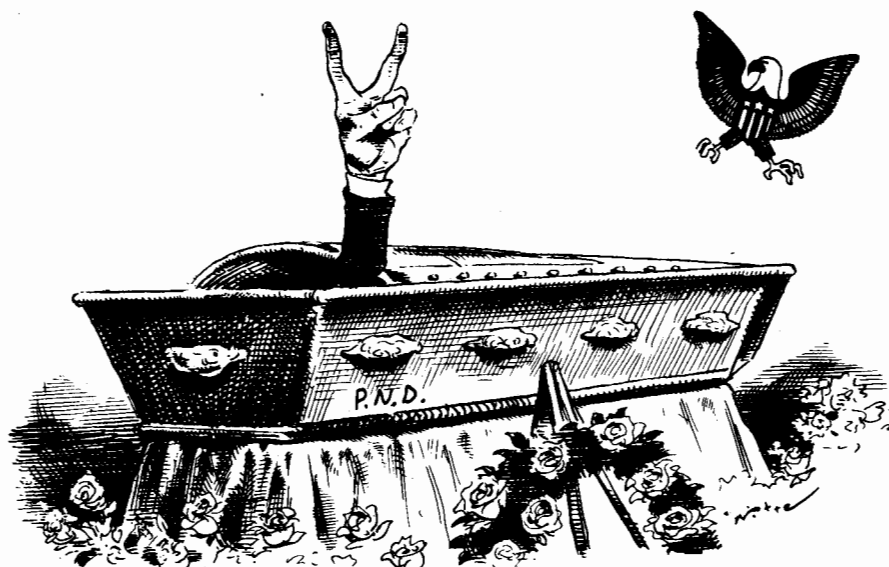


for any excuse to abandon the US consulate. They found it: length.

A last ditch effort was made to get a march going to the US Consulate at the February Rally General Meeting - it failed. Instead, the SRWC, against PND policy, refused to take the march up from the US consulate, proposing that the starting point be moved northward to opposite the Arts Centre - accepted. To absolve the collective conscience of PND though, the meeting voted funds to MAUM and FoE, marching from BP House and Women for Survival, marching from the US Consulate.

So whence politicisation, the fervent hope of a disappointed left.

Jonathan Strauss



Where Will You Be On April 15?