

# socialist worker

NO. 4 • WINTER, 1978 • \$1.00

THEORETICAL JOURNAL OF THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL IN AUSTRALIA



Railway workers meeting, Petrograd, 1917.

## Socialist democracy

A socialist strategy for labor

### Fighting the Fraser offensive

### The IWW and the fight against war

PER 320 532205

SO4

329-0721

~~320 532205~~

~~SO4~~

72 JUN 1978

# socialist worker

NO. 4 • WINTER, 1978

## Contents

- 3 EDITORIAL Trotskyist Unification Shows Way Forward/  
Defend Democracy in the NSW ALP  
6 Fighting the Fraser Offensive  
23 Political Report by Jim McLroy  
40 PAGES FROM OUR RADICAL PAST The IWW and the  
Fight Against Imperialist War by Gordon Adler  
46 Socialist Democracy and the Dictatorship of the  
Proletariat

All correspondence to Socialist Worker, PO Box K208,  
Haymarket, 2000. Tel (02) 211 2332

Published by New Course Publishing Company Pty. Ltd., 2nd  
Floor, 215A Thomas St., Haymarket, 2000. Printed by Media  
Press (Sales) Pty. Ltd., 7 Garners Ave., Marrickville, 2204.  
(Tel. (02) 560 3900)

Subscriptions: \$4.00 for one year. Write for international  
rates.

Registered at Haymarket Post Office for transmission by post  
as a periodical, Category B.

## In this issue

With this issue of *Socialist Worker* we resume publication after a long break. The main reason for this delay has been financial. But we plan to regularise the appearance of *Socialist Worker* from now on and two further issues will appear this year.

Our fourth issue contains some major articles. We begin with "Fighting the Fraser Offensive." This resolution was adopted by the sixth national conference of the Socialist Workers Party, held in Sydney in January of this year. At this conference the Communist League and the SWP fused to form a united Trotskyist party. The resolution thus represents the views of the new Socialist Workers Party. This document gives a clear analysis of the Fraser offensive and clear prescriptions for the struggle against it.

The resolution is followed by the political report which was given to the conference by Jim McLroy. This report updates the resolution by giving an analysis of the last Federal elections and then goes on to amplify on some of the points made in "Fighting the Fraser Offensive."

McLroy's comments on the election refute the facile excuses for Labor's 1977 loss given by its apologists—on both the right and the left.

Gordon Adler's article on the Industrial Workers of the World in Australia is the first of a regular feature which we plan to carry in *Socialist Worker*. "Pages from our radical past" will give a brief review each issue of an important episode in the history of the labor movement in this country.

The final article in this issue is an extremely important one. "Socialist Democracy and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat" is a resolution of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International, the world Trotskyist organisation. This resolution not only explains the revolutionary socialist view on this crucial question, but it aims to elicit responses and debate on the subject. The United Secretariat hopes to initiate a broad debate in the labor movement with the publication of this document. *Socialist Worker* welcomes brief comments by readers on this topic.

## Editorial

### Trotskyist unification shows way forward

*Socialist Worker* is now more than ever the "theoretical journal of the Fourth International in Australia." This is our first issue since the fusion of the Communist League and the Socialist Workers Party in January of this year. With this coming together of two previously separate organisations, all the supporters of the Fourth International in Australia are united in a single party, the Socialist Workers Party.

Despite a five-year existence as separate groups, the CL and the SWP were able to fuse because both stood on the common ground of the Trotskyist program and increasingly there was a convergence of views on the way forward for the class struggle in this country. This was demonstrated in several months of joint work before the January conference.

And now, some four months later, we can say unequivocally that the fusion has been an unqualified success and has laid the basis for the significant progress made by the SWP since then.

The unification of the Australian Trotskyists is part of an

international unification of Fourth International supporters. Fusions of groups supporting the Fourth International have already taken place, or will shortly take place, in Canada, Spain, Mexico, and Peru. This new unity



in the world Trotskyist movement reflects an increasing agreement on the fundamental issues facing the world working class today. The fact that in the course of a long and basic prior debate the Fourth International retained its unity is a reflection of its historic vitality and seriousness.

The unity of the Fourth International stands in stark contrast to the growing crisis and disintegration of international Stalinism. For more and more radical workers and youth around the world, Trotskyism appears as the only viable alternative to bankrupt Social Democratic and Stalinist reformism. The process of reunification in the Fourth International establishes the basis for big gains in the period ahead.

In Australia the fusion of the Communist League and the

Socialist Workers Party shows our seriousness in constructing the indispensable revolutionary workers party. As Trotskyists, we are not interested in building a church or a sect, open only to the initiated, but a mass combat party which unites all those who want to fight for a socialist revolution.

On the road to building the mass revolutionary party, of which the SWP considers itself only the essential nucleus, all sorts of regroupments will take place. Out of the crisis of Stalinism in all its forms, for example, many militants will come to consider the program of Trotskyism and accept its essential validity. They will find the Socialist Workers Party ready to discuss these questions through to the end with them in a comradely spirit. There are no preconditions for us except a serious commitment to the cause of socialism.

## Defend Democracy in NSW ALP

In late April, the right-wing dominated Administrative Committee of the NSW Labor Party passed a motion calling for the expulsion of any ALP member associated with the production or distribution of the weekly socialist newspaper *Direct Action*. This blatantly undemocratic and cynical decision is a blow against the rights of all ALP members to freely consider all points of view and make up their own minds on the way forward for the Labor Party.

The attitude of the Administrative Committee was revealed quite clearly in their method of announcing the decision. An article on the ban appeared in the May 6 *Sydney Morning Herald* quoting NSW ALP general secretary Graeme Richardson—some time later the decision was communicated to the branches. That is, the decision to proscribe the unwavering socialist supporters of a vote for Labor was first announced in the solidly anti-Labor press!

The unparalleled cynicism of the ban can be seen by considering the publications that ALP right wingers have written for in the past. Bob Carr, a leading member of the NSW right-wing machine, is a regular columnist for the rabidly right-wing, Labor-hating, worker-hating *Bulletin!* Other Labor leaders have written for Murdoch's *Australian* and the *Fairfax Sun*, both utterly reactionary newspapers.

It is acceptable for right-wing ALP leaders to associate with the anti-Labor press, but it is not acceptable for left-wing members of the party to associate with *Direct Action*, which in its eight-year history has always called for the return of Labor, on both the Federal and State levels.

What the right wing fear is *Direct Action's* socialist ideas. NSW ALP State President John Ducker and his

gang would rather see the Labor Party's internal life completely stifled than have their own views challenged in any way. The right-wing view is that the party is their personal property; the rank and file don't have rights, only the duty to follow orders and keep quiet.

The support that has already been gained for the right of ALP members to associate with *Direct Action* and circulate it within the Labor Party and elsewhere shows that many party members don't accept the right-wing view.

Many party members, inside NSW and outside, have signed a petition to the NSW Administrative Committee calling on it to rescind its ban on *Direct Action*. The recent NSW Young Labor Council conference passed a motion, 80 votes to 20, condemning the ban.

We urge our ALP readers to support the campaign against this reactionary ban; by helping to circulate the petition; and by moving motions in your ALP or YLA branch.

## Had enough?

Had enough unemployment? Had enough of wage cuts? Enough anti-union laws? Enough inflation?

Had enough of men saying women shouldn't work? Enough restrictions on the right to abortion? Enough of lower pay for the same work?

Had enough of second or third-class citizenship for Blacks and migrants?

Had enough of uranium to last a lifetime (however short that might be)?

Had enough pesticides in your food, lead in the air you breathe, and sewage in your water?

Had enough of militarism? Enough of Australian support for dictators?

Enough of police spies?

Enough of bureaucrats suppressing democracy in China, the Soviet Union—and your trade union?

Enough of Fraser—and of the ALP leaders who won't fight him?

So have we. The Socialist Workers Party is a party of people like you—people who have had enough. And who are working together to do something about it. It takes socialism. It takes a party. Join us.

I want to join the SWP.  
 Send more information.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Postcode \_\_\_\_\_

Return to: PO Box K208, Haymarket 2000.  
Or contact the SWPers nearest you:

Back issues of

## socialist worker

No. 1, March 1977

*The Crisis in Women's Liberation: The Need for a Socialist Perspective* • *Socialist Revolution and the Struggle for Women's Liberation* • *Alliances and the Revolutionary Party* • *In Defence of Engels* • *Brownmiller on Rape: A Betrayal of Feminism*

No. 2, May 1977

*Australian Nationalism: A Reactionary Ideology* • *The Socialist Revolution in the Arab East* • *Marxism and the National Question* • *The Role of Women's Liberation in the Socialist Revolution* • *Damned Whores and God's Police* • *Rosa Luxemburg and the National Question*

No. 3, August 1977

*Unemployment: A Central Issue for the Whole Labor Movement* • *Why Socialists Oppose Australian Nationalism* • *Rebel in a Chinese Girls School* • *Organizational Principles of the SWP* • *Timpanaro's Defence of Materialism* • *Nationalism in Australian Literature*

Each issue \$0.60. Order from: Socialist Worker, PO Box K208, Haymarket, 2000 (postage free).

Adelaide: 287 Rundle St, Adelaide 5000. Ph 223-4539.

Brisbane: Room 8, 1st floor, 333 Georg St (enter from Turbot St). Ph 221-4854.

Geelong: PO Box 1057, Geelong 3220.

Hobart: GPO Box 3883, Hobart 7001. Ph 34-7913.

Melbourne regional office: GPO Box 2627X, Melbourne 3001. Ph 419-4528.

Fitzroy-Collingwood: c - Pathfinder Bookshop, 82 Smith St, Collingwood 3066. Ph 419-4528.

South Eastern Suburbs: GPO Box 2627X, Melbourne 3001. Ph 544-0566.

Western Suburbs: c - Pathfinder Bookroom, rooms 4 and 5, 48 Lards St, Footscray 3011.

Newcastle: Barry Marsh, 12 Parrall Place, Newcastle.

Sydney regional office: c - Pathfinder Bookroom, 215A Thomas St, Haymarket 2000.

Ph 211-4764.

Leichhardt: 179 St Johns Rd, Glebe 2037. Ph 660-6672.

Parramatta: c - Pathfinder Bookroom, room 7, 247 Church St, Parramatta 2150.

South Sydney: Phone 699-4434.

Wollongong: Mack Costa, c - Wollongong University SRC.

# Fighting the Fraser offensive

Resolution adopted by the Socialist Workers Party sixth national conference, January, 1978.

The Canberra "coup" of November 11, 1975, ushered in a new period of political instability in Australia. While it helped to undermine many of the myths about parliamentary "democracy" in this country, it also emphasised that the Australian political and economic crisis is inseparable from the worldwide crisis of imperialism—a crisis which has deepened qualitatively in the last decade and continues to deepen with every year that passes.



Striking Latrobe Valley powerworkers vote at 1977 meeting.

## The Fall of Labor: Why Fraser was Brought to Power

The Canberra "coup" of November 11, 1975, ushered in a new period of political instability in Australia. While it helped to undermine many of the myths about parliamentary "democracy" in this country, it also emphasised that the Australian political and economic crisis is inseparable from the worldwide crisis of imperialism—a crisis which has deepened qualitatively in the last decade and continues to deepen with every year that passes.

In this report, we consider the character of the crisis initiated with the coming to power of the Fraser government and the direction of the sharpening class polarisation now taking place under the impact of the most vicious ruling-class offensive against living and working conditions since the Great Depression. The report summarises and updates the more comprehensive analysis in the two documents adopted by the Socialist Workers Party and the Communist League earlier in 1977: "The Fraser Offensive: How the Labor Movement Can Fight Back," adopted by the SWP at its fifth national conference in January, and the CL's political perspectives document entitled "The Struggle Against the Capitalist Offensive and the Fraser Government," adopted at the CL's sixth national conference in April.

The ALP came to office in December 1972 on a tide of working class militancy, fed by the radicalisation around the Vietnam War, the economic downturn of 1971-72, and the internal divisions in the conservative coalition after 23 years of uninterrupted rule in the Federal sphere. In 1973 and 1974, considerable wage gains and other social improvements were won under the impact of inflationary boom conditions and a

self-confident working class. The capitalist class itself was split in 1972—significant sections moved to support a Whitlam victory as a means of restoring faith in the system and of carrying out some much-needed rationalisations which, for various reasons, the Liberal-Country party coalition was incapable of undertaking.

But the project was upset by the international economic recession which struck in late 1974. The recession plunged the Australian economy into its deepest slump since World War II, and quickly demolished the ALP leadership's dreams of "peacefully" reforming the capitalist system. The Whitlam government took every opportunity to confirm its loyal commitment to shoring up the system—an attempted wage-price freeze referendum in late 1973, economic policies which merely worsened unemployment rather than protecting jobs, handouts and incentives to the big corporations, and finally, a wage indexation scheme aimed at restricting the independent struggles of the unions for full compensation for soaring prices.

As the recession worsened and workers showed increasing signs of wanting to struggle to defend living standards, the Labor government shifted further and further to the right. The Hayden cutback Budget of August 1975 was a last-ditch attempt to regain the confidence of the bourgeoisie in the ability of the ALP leaders to limit working class gains and boost profits. But, by that time virtually the entire ruling class was determined to throw Labor out—by any means necessary—and install a more direct instrument of the bosses' will, a new Liberal-National Country party regime under Malcolm Fraser.

The blocking of Labor's Budget by the conservative-controlled Senate and then the undemocratic dismissal of Whitlam by Governor-General Kerr rocked the Australian

political order to its foundations. After failing to have Labor defeated in the 1974 elections (again forced by the Senate), the ruling class were absolutely determined to bring in a regime of confrontation under "strong man" Fraser to turn back the social gains of the past and put the full burden of the economic crisis on the backs of the working class.

**"The logic of this crisis is to lead to the question of which class will rule—the capitalists . . . or the working class, which alone can transform society to eliminate class exploitation and oppression through a socialist revolution."**

For the bosses the odds were very high. Not only were they faced with the most severe economic crisis for decades, but Australian capitalism was suffering a historic structural crisis which threatened its very survival. The logic of this crisis is to lead to the question of which class will rule—the capitalists, who promise worsening living standards, increasing restrictions on basic democratic rights, including the right of the trade unions to organise and take industrial action, and stepped up oppression of women, migrants, Blacks, and gays, or the working class, which alone can transform society to eliminate class exploitation and oppression through a socialist revolution.

The fear of a continuing radicalisation of workers, which despite all its efforts, the Labor government would be unable to control, prompted the ruling class to take one of the biggest gambles in its history—the sacking of the Labor government. The gamble was not on the role of Hawke and Whitlam, who did their job by refusing to call an immediate general strike and mass mobilisation of Labor supporters, but on the ability of the Labor misleaders to channel the widespread anger of workers at the dismissal of Labor from office. In the event, despite the broad feeling for a general strike, the Labor and union leadership was able to redirect the mass upsurge into reliance on the parliamentary process.

Even so, there were walkouts, demonstrations, and rallies of tens of thousands in the major cities—all of which showed the broad reaction of workers to an attack on their rights. It was the single biggest class polarisation since the radicalisation of the 1930s.

But Fraser was able to win a major electoral victory in December 1975 because of the disorientation of less conscious sections of the

working class and the ability of Fraser to convince middle-class and small-farmer elements that the Liberals would solve their economic problems. This victory was *not* based on a fundamental turn to the right by the majority of the population, but on demoralisation caused by the class treachery of the Labor government which had failed to defend the interests of the workers and their allies against the ruling-class onslaught.

Fraser was brought to power by the ruling class to carry out the most concerted and ruthless campaign of cutbacks, attacks on democratic rights, and shift of resources from the public to the private sector undertaken since the early 1930s. The aim was, and is, to restore profit rates to at least the levels of the 1960s, and to boost the competitiveness of Australian industry by slashing real wages and demolishing working conditions on a large scale.

To achieve this goal, it was necessary to inflict important defeats on the workers movement. The record of the past two years has been that of an escalating series of attacks on every area of social gain, beginning with the least organised sections of society such as Blacks, women, migrants, and youth, and building up to a direct assault on the most militant sections of the trade union movement itself.

**"Fraser was brought to power by the ruling class to carry out the most concerted and ruthless campaign of cutbacks, attacks on democratic rights, and shift of resources from the public to the private sector undertaken since the early 1930s."**

Primarily because of the treacherous role of the ACTU and ALP leaderships, a series of setbacks have been suffered by the working class in this period—the butchering of Medibank, falling real wages through partial indexation, record levels of unemployment which continue to climb to new and catastrophic heights, acceptance of Fraser's "industrial police force" (the Industrial Relations Bureau), public spending slashed in two horror Budgets, and so on. At each stage, Fraser has been able to escalate his attacks to a considerable extent because of the continual retreats of the ALP and the union leaderships.

Nevertheless, the working class has still not suffered a decisive defeat which destroys its

fighting capability in a fundamental way. The Fraser government has been as yet unable to reestablish the kind of economic recovery which stabilises the position of capital for a whole period. In fact, the Australian economy continues in the doldrums, even more so than its international trading partners and rivals in the imperialist camp.

It is this failure by the Fraser government to achieve its major objectives till now which has created the present dissent in the ruling class over its performance. With a rapidly growing mass opposition to the government's economic policies, including the crisis precipitated by the decision to proceed with uranium mining and export, and even the possibility of a return of a Labor administration at the next election, the Fraser government is in trouble.

We will go on to consider the economic and political basis of this crisis for the capitalist class, and the response of the workers movement to the ruling class offensive—both the betrayals of the labor and union misleaders and the development of a fight back by the more conscious sections of the working class and its allies.

### The Fraser Offensive in 1977

Given its basic strategic goal of massively redistributing income from the working class to the capitalist class—a goal which has not changed markedly in the two years of its rule—the Fraser government has continued into 1977 the basic direction of its policies of the previous year. These policies are described in some detail in the previous political resolutions of the CL and the SWP.

The most drastic weapon used so far by this government has been the creation of the biggest pool of unemployment in the post-war era. The Fraser regime has pursued a conscious policy of driving up unemployment in order to undercut worker militancy, to enforce labor discipline, and to provide a reserve army of jobless as a bludgeon against the unions. In addition to the conscious policy of cutbacks etc which increases unemployment drastically, the impact of the recession in this country has been especially severe—it has forced unemployment from a traditional relatively low level of less than 2 per cent in this country, to a figure in late 1977 of 5.5 per cent and predicted heights for 1978 of 6, 7, and even 8 per cent.

Together with this has been a vendetta against the jobless, branding them as "dole bludgers" and denying them democratic rights. This attack on the unemployed (and particularly school leavers who are being denied the right to unemployment benefits) is an aspect of the government's overall tactic for focusing initially



Fraser: brought to power by the ruling class to attack working class and restore business profits.

on the least organised sections of the community to take the brunt of the first assaults. The consequence of such a policy in the unemployment area has been the creation of the second highest level of youth unemployment in the OECD countries (after Italy)—55 per cent of Australia's jobless are under 25!

This divide-and-rule tactic has been at the heart of the Fraser government's approach throughout. It has been at least partially successful *primarily* because of the criminal failure of the leaders of the working-class movement to act to defend these weaker sections under attack, and because of the ability of the government and the bosses to use racism, sexism, and anti-youth feelings to sow further divisions in the working class.

The combination of the Fraser government's policies, the continuing failure of employment to pick up even in a period of partial "recovery," and the onset of severe structural problems in Australian industry (which are causing redun-

dancies on a massive scale), have created a fundamentally new economic period for Australia—"international" levels of unemployment, and large-scale structural unemployment on a long-term basis. Especially for large numbers of youth, women, Blacks, and migrants, this means a future with no prospect of jobs. It has enormous social and political implications for the next whole period—a point which has not escaped some bourgeois commentators and Labor reformists such as NSW Premier Neville Wran.

Capitalism's "twin evils"—unemployment and inflation—are insoluble problems for the Australian ruling class in this period. On the wages question, the government has been absolutely clear—its major aim is to slash real wages and boost the share of profits in the national income. Treasurer Lynch emphasised this aim again in this year's Budget.

Already, in the past two years, wages have been falling by at least 5 per cent in real terms, ie, relative to inflation. The main instrument of this has been the Arbitration Commission's policy of partial or "plateau" indexation.

Even this is not regarded as enough by the government. Significant political pressure has been put on the commission to tighten up even further—the possibility of a statutory wage freeze has been raised a number of times in the past year by government ministers. Nevertheless, the abject failure of Fraser's "voluntary" wage-price freeze in May was testimony to the limits to the government's sabbility in this area. Only drastic new statutory powers (which were denied

Whitlam by popular vote in the December 1973 referendum) can give the government the direct capacity to impose a legal freeze on wages.

What the experience of the past two years has underlined again is the key role of the arbitration system in restricting wage struggles. The restrictive guidelines around the indexation system have been effective overall. In 1976, 92 per cent of the increase in the adult male wage was due to indexation (94 per cent for the female wage).

**"Fraser's political offensive against the union movement is two-pronged. First of all is the ferocious barrage of lies and distortions about 'irresponsible strikes' . . . The other aspect . . . is to strengthen, step by step, state powers against the union movement and industrial action."**

But another aspect of the centralisation of the ruling-class offensive under Fraser has been the increasingly *political* character of struggles around even the most immediate wage demands, even on an isolated level. *Every* wage demand is seen as a challenge to the wage freeze. It is met with the entire propaganda and political armoury of the capitalists—and increasingly, the backing of the repressive state machinery.

Thus, important individual wage campaigns—the Victorian petrol tanker drivers, the air traffic controllers, public transport workers, and electricity workers, for instance—have been met with the most severe attacks, including threats of force. The same holds for virtually every important industrial struggle—the Redfern Mail Exchange workers, transport workers in Western Australia, oil workers, builders laborers, and so on.

Other important indicators of the lengths the bourgeoisie may be prepared to go are the battle around Newport power station in Melbourne, and, of course, the developing confrontation around uranium.

And now, most recently, we have seen Hamer declare a state of emergency in Victoria over the pathbreaking Latrobe Valley power strike—the first time the State's Essential Services Act has been implemented since its passage in 1948.

Premier Hamer correctly described what the Latrobe struggle was all about when he said that Victoria was a "battlefield" and added: "There's a clear desire—an objective if you like—to overturn wage indexation and we are at the moment in the forefront of that battle."

Later he said: "The SEC cannot and will not grant wage increases outside the wage indexation guidelines."

This is the dilemma of the ruling class and its governments (Hamer and Fraser are cooperating closely in the Latrobe Valley dispute, for instance). Economic necessity dictates that the capitalist class *tighten*, not let up, the stranglehold on wages which has been applied for at least two years now.

The Latrobe power workers were clearly challenging the indexation guidelines head on. If they succeeded it would signal a rush of claims from wide sections of the working class—a disastrous situation for governments and employers alike.

Throughout the almost two years of the Fraser regime, a central part of government policy has been to strengthen the arsenal of its anti-union powers, and to remorselessly cut back on the right to organise and to strike. This has been part of a general offensive against democratic rights in every sphere.

This anti-democratic assault is a precondition to success of its economic offensive. Because, with a working class used to the idea of rising living conditions over a long period (during the postwar boom), and a union movement strengthened during that postwar period, working people can be expected to take only so much without significant retaliation.

It is this potential for a massive fight back which makes the Fraser government's *political* offensive so vital to the ruling class. Every

possible measure has to be taken to divide the working class and its oppressed allies, to isolate the most combative and militant sectors, and to blunt any possible broad struggle by blaming the economic crisis on the unions, the communists, women, Blacks, migrants, "dole bludgers," students, and so on. Scapegoating is the name of the game.

And this is reflected by the most massive anti-working class and red-baiting propaganda barrage seen in this country since the end of the Cold War period.

Strikes are blamed on "communist union officials", workers are attacked for "excessive wage demands"; "high wages" are supposed to cause unemployment; the jobless don't really want to work; married women are taking jobs from men and young people; etc, etc, etc, ad nauseum.

So far, Fraser and the three non-Labor State governments have held back from a direct confrontation with the labor movement—such as would no doubt follow from the jailing of

## Subscribe to Intercontinental Press/Inprecor

Intercontinental Press/Inprecor is a weekly socialist newsmagazine. Each issue carries reports and analyses of the highlights of world events. IP/I has an unparalleled scope and depth of coverage.

Intercontinental Press/Inprecor is the socialist alternative to Time and Newsweek. Why not subscribe now? Subscription rates (airmail) are: \$6 for three months (12 issues); \$12 for six months (24 issues); and \$24 for one year (48 issues).

Enclosed is \$  for  months of Intercontinental Press/Inprecor.

NAME

ADDRESS

POSTCODE

Return to: Pathfinder Press, PO Box K208, Haymarket 2000. (Cheques, etc to Pathfinder Press)



Jobless outside government "employment" office. Government and media have launched campaign to portray unemployed as lazy "dole bludgers" and turn victims into criminals.



Smiles all round at 50th anniversary dinner of ACTU as union and ALP leaders demonstrate their cooperation with ruling class. From left: Sir John Moore, Arbitration Commission president; Harold Souter, ACTU secretary; Bob Hawke, ACTU president; George Pollites, executive director of the Australian Council of Employers' Federations; Gough Whitlam, then ALP leader; and Sir Richard Kirby, a former president of the Arbitration Commission.

union officials or unionists as a result of an industrial dispute. For one thing, such a course of action would be extremely dangerous for the ruling class. It might provoke a mass response much greater than the Clarric O'Shea upsurge of 1969—and in the present atmosphere of anger at the policies of the Fraser government, any such upsurge might well threaten to get out of the control of Bob Hawke and the union and Labor Party misleaders.

For another thing, Fraser and his corporate backers have not by any means exhausted the political options open to them (although the room for manoeuvre has narrowed with the continued economic crisis). Essentially, the capitalist class are still relying on the role of Hawke and his fellow Labor fakery to hold back or defuse the growing combativity of significant sections of the working class.

Fraser's political offensive against the union movement is two-pronged. First of all is the ferocious barrage of lies and distortions, backed up constantly in the capitalist media, about "irresponsible strikes," etc. This is designed to mobilise middle-class and backward working-class opinion against the more militant sections of the workers movement, and to cover up the bosses' responsibility for the economic crisis. It appears from opinion polls taken in recent times that this ceaseless campaign is having some success.

The other aspect of Fraser's policy is to strengthen, step by step, state powers against the union movement and against industrial action. Perhaps the two most important developments in this process in 1977 have been the formation of an Industrial Relations Bureau to act as a police force against the unions, and the Com-

monwealth Employees (Employment Provisions) Act, allowing the government to dismiss or stand down any public worker allegedly affected by a strike, irrespective of whether the worker is directly involved in the strike or not!

Both these measures have important implications for the future ability of the government to suppress industrial action. They have not yet been used by Fraser. Rather measures like these are part of the preparation for more decisive battles yet to come.

This campaign of stepped-up repression has involved close collaboration between the Fraser government and the three non-Labor State governments—the Court, Bjelke-Petersen, and Hamer regimes. Each of these State governments has played a particular role in testing the ground for Fraser and the ruling class in different areas of the class struggle.

At present, the Bjelke-Petersen government has shown especial willingness to suppress civil liberties—most notably with its ban on political street marches. This is a product partly of the specific situation in Queensland, with the abject weakness of the ALP and trade union leaderships, and the character of the Queensland National Party and its premier. But, more importantly, it fits in closely with the national goals of the ruling class, which seeks continually to probe weaknesses in the organisation of the workers movement and its allies, and to push democratic rights and living standards inexorably back.

In Western Australia, in June, the Court regime tried to jail 21 pickets involved in a Transport Workers Union dispute—once again, as a kind of test case to see if another fundamental union right could be struck out. This attempt was stopped by the large-scale mobilisation of transport workers and their supporters, especially in the maritime trades.

In several States, we have seen challenges to the closed shop, and attempts, as in Broken Hill through the Latham case to break union solidarity. In each case, the capitalist class has been willing to push disputes to the brink of confrontation, without actually provoking an all-out conflict. Such has also been the case in Victoria with the long-standing battle around Newport and, most recently, the Latrobe Valley. This reflects the continuing unstable equilibrium in the class struggle generally.

With the three Labor State governments largely standing by and allowing the Fraser offensive to proceed without major challenge, the way is being opened for even more severe threats to basic union and democratic rights in the coming year.

The ruling class faces a number of severe tactical problems at this time. There are growing divisions on some basic issues, including the future course and/or prospects of the Fraser government.

These problems are partly economic and partly political, with the two, of course, being closely related. In Malcolm Fraser the bourgeoisie felt they had found a Liberal leader who could resolve the leadership crisis of the major Australian capitalist party—and hence, of a coalition government. At the same time, the rulers of this country are mindful of the lessons of the Heath Tory government in Britain which was brought down to a considerable extent by over-playing its hand against the miners.

**"The role of the ALP and trade union leaderships has been vital to the ability of the Fraser government to attack working class wages, conditions, and democratic rights over the whole period since the coalition came to power."**

In carrying out the most brutal anti-working class drive in over 30 years, with the ever-present danger of causing a mass response which the Labor fakery will be unable to control, the coalition parties are bound to face policy divisions about how far and fast to proceed. Already, there have been open disagreements and even defections, on both the "left" and the "right."

Firstly, there was the resignation of Don Chipp to form his Australian Democrats—essentially a revival in a new form of the Australia Party concept of the early 1970s (ie, a "centre" party, neither Labor nor Tory—but, of course, a small—"liberal capitalist party through and through). It is important to note that support for the Australian Democrats is largely derived from middle-class and even small capitalist elements disenchanted with the harsh, and seemingly ineffective policies of Fraser.

But it is noteworthy that any growth of this force is largely, again, testimony to the defeat of the ALP leaders who have totally failed to advance a class alternative to Fraser. Consequently, as in the past, the petit bourgeoisie is left floundering in the middle. Only an aggressive fight back by the labor movement can draw significant layers of the middle classes into an alliance with the working class—on the terms of

the working class. (For the Social Democrats and Stalinists, the alliance is to be made the other way around!)

On the other hand, resignations by two Liberal backbenchers in October have emphasised that some sections of the ruling class would like Fraser to hoe in even harder than at present. The split over the referendums in the middle of the year, the expulsion of two liberal MLAs in Victoria, the divisions between the Liberal and National parties in Queensland and elsewhere, are also products of friction over policy as well as over special interests.

The recent evolution of the Cattlemen's Association may signal the start of a break-up of the hegemony of the NCP over small farmers. The severity of the rural economic crisis has hit small farmers particularly hard. Many thousands are being driven into bankruptcy. For perhaps the first time on a wide scale, sections of these farmers are blaming not the unions, but increasingly, big business, the Fraser government, and even the NCP itself for their problems. This is potentially an important political development which could—with correct leadership from the labor movement—lead to an alliance between workers and small farmers. Naturally enough, no such leadership is coming from the present Labor tops.

On the economic front, there are strong and growing tactical disagreements, over monetary policy, interest rates, the degree to which cuts in public spending should be increased or else further stimulus given to the economy through selective boosts to the public sector, etc. And, of course, these disagreements reflect the fact of the continued lag of the Australian "recovery" behind other major imperialist powers.

The process of restructuring the economy has reached a critical point. In fact, the present dominant trend in the Fraser government is toward increased tariffs, quotas, and other subsidies to inefficient industries, rather than less. (This is in direct contradiction to the claims of the Stalinists and the Labor "left" through the People's Economic Program analysis.)

Such policies, naturally, only serve to store up further future trouble for the capitalist class—making Australian industry less internationally competitive than ever. (A recent study suggested that, with New Zealand, Australia already has the most highly protected secondary industry in the imperialist world.) Pro-"restructuring" forces such as those represented by the Industries Assistance Commission and the *Financial Review* never tire of reminding Fraser of this fact (at least until the government had the IAC hobbled recently.)

## Australia and the International Economic Crisis

Trends in the international imperialist economy merely promise more problems for the Australian capitalist class, and the Fraser government in particular, in the coming year.

Following the weak recovery experienced by the major capitalist economies over the last couple of years, there are now increasing forecasts of a further recession for 1978. Such predictions are in accord with the general analysis of the current economic period made by the Fourth International—that we have entered a long period of downturn characterised by low or even negative growth rates, punctuated by slumps followed by ever weaker recoveries. The basis of this crisis is the re-emergence of the classical contradictions of capitalism on a new scale after the 25-year "boom" issuing from the Second World War.

The signal for this new period was the international recession of 1974-75—the first coordinated world recession since the war. The basic problem for the Australian bourgeoisie is that it suffered from the effects of that recession perhaps more than most of its international trading partners and competitors.

**"The ACTU has done nothing to defend the most oppressed sections—Blacks, women, migrants, and youth who have suffered worst under the Fraser offensive."**

In the recent period, we have seen a dilemma emerge for the Australian ruling class with the increasing weakness of the Australian dollar, which has forced the Fraser government to seek massive loans overseas. (This is ironic when one considers that the Whitlam government was once down partly on the excuse of the so-called "loans affair" in 1975. The trouble was that the Labor government wanted to borrow from "disreputable" Arab sources, and not the "old-boy network" used by the Liberals today and in the past.)

This crisis should be seen within the framework of developments internationally. While on the one hand United States postwar economic hegemony has been destroyed by the rise of Japan, West Germany, etc, as industrial powers in the 1960s and 1970s, the US ruling class has attempted to strike back by economic measures (begun by Nixon in 1971) aimed at



Anti-uranium demonstration, Melbourne, March 31, 1978. "Land rights, not uranium mining" was prominent theme of action.

improving its position relative to the rest of the imperialist world. This onset of a new inter-imperialist rivalry has merely intensified the contradictions of the capitalist world, and led to severe economic problems for most of the advanced capitalist countries (not to mention the staggering growth of debt, etc, being experienced by the semicolonial world).

As reported in the October 10, 1977, issue of *Intercontinental Press*, "Some of the weaker imperialist countries are also plagued by lagging exports and an increasing burden of debt required to finance the goods they buy abroad. The London *Economist* of September 10 points out that the trade balances of thirteen 'smaller industrial countries' [which include Australia] 'have looked sicker and sicker.'

"Naturally," the magazine says, 'some of the unlucky 13 (such as Norway, Iceland, Portugal) were worse hit than the others . . . but they were all in the red.'

"The *Economist* concludes:

"If they could see a world economy which would expand them out of their deficits, then the small OECD countries would doubtless be happy to hang on for the ride. But they cannot. So they seem set on a course of devaluation and deflation."

Clearly, Fraser and Lynch have been putting their hopes on just such an "export-led" recovery. But current trends would seem to make their expectations extremely optimistic.

One important consequence of this tighter world economic period is the increasing trend to

protectionism as the various national bourgeoisies move to defend their own economic interests against overseas competition. This is epitomised by the world crisis in steel, leading to massive overproduction and unemployment problems. (The present crisis of BHP should be seen in this context—not just as a domestic question.)

The combination of this protectionist drive and the general downturn in world trade has contributed to sharpening conflict between Australia and its major trading partners, eg, strong exchanges with Japan over beef and sugar, conflict with the European Economic Community over agricultural produce, etc. This general situation has also led to friction between the Fraser government and the governments of the ASEAN countries of South-East Asia which want an evening out of their trade imbalances with Australia.

One important innovation by the Fraser regime is the turn to so-called "uranium diplomacy." Fraser and Anthony clearly see uranium exports as a vital weapon in their pressure for trade concessions, eg, in relation to Japan and the EEC. This is a major impetus for the coalition in their rush to implement mining and export of uranium. Failure to carry out this policy would be a significant setback to their entire economic strategy.

The structural crisis of Australian manufacturing industry is getting worse. As tariffs go up, inefficiency increases. Both ALP and Liberal-NCP leaders support "restructuring in princi-



ple." But neither can break from protectionism in the short-to-medium term. (As sections of capitalist opinion represented by the *Financial Review* keep asking, when does the short term end and the long term begin?)

This is stirring up further long-term trouble, and accentuating the severity of "restructuring" when it is forced onto the ruling class by events. Moreover, even the famed projected "mining boom" may not be the great event it is cracked up to be. For example, the Melbourne *Age* of October 12 reported a speech by A.H. Parbo, the chairman of one of Australia's largest mining corporations, Western Mining Corporation, in which he forecast gloom for the mineral industry for the next few years. He said that since June he had discounted forecasts of a new minerals boom just around the corner—and that events since then had tended to support the slow-growth theory.

"Some forecasters consider that we are entering a new downturn in the world economic cycle, while others see a temporary break in continuing recovery. Whatever the explanation, there is presently unused productive capacity in virtually all minerals," he said.

He added, in line with the statements of many employers, as well as Federal government

leaders, that *the problem of regaining competitiveness on world markets "is perhaps the most important economic issue facing Australia today."* This is the basic dilemma of the ruling class right now, and has been a motor force of the Fraser government's offensive from the time when it first came to office. That problem is still very far from being solved, and there lies the rub, both for Fraser, and for the employing class. How can it be overcome? This is a key question for 1978.

*If a world recession occurs in 1978*, Fraser will be in deep trouble as his policies rely on a continuing world upturn. More ominously, some commentators are warning of even more dire events: New York Senator Jacob Javits, for instance, is reported in the *New York Times* as telling a Senate Banking Committee hearing on August 29 of "worldwide depression in two or three years" unless steps are taken now to shore up the international economic system.

"Such a depression," he added, "could last as long as the last depression of the 1930s and possibly even longer, because, obviously, in this age of atomic warfare, we cannot expect to have the war-led recovery that occurred then."

At the very least, such warnings raise the possibility of a new recession in this country in

1978. This prospect also deepens divisions in the Australian ruling class, even making some forward-looking sections entertain once again the possibility of another Labor government as the only way to head off a mass explosion against an increasingly unpopular L-NCP regime.

The danger of another Labor victory would be, as before, its impetus to the struggles of workers and their allies. Could a new Labor government, under either Whitlam or Hayden, control such an upsurge? In this situation, the necessity for a more open "social contract," or formalised "trade-off," on the British model, might then become predominant. In this case, the relationship of forces within the labor movement would be crucial—and the key role of Hawke would be tested to its very limits.

**"The Fraser regime has pursued a conscious policy of driving up unemployment in order to undercut worker militancy, to enforce labor discipline, and to provide a reserve army of jobless as a bludgeon against the unions."**

There are no simple solutions in any event. The likely worsening of the economic situation in 1978, and a further drastic rise in unemployment, will deepen the political crisis faced by the Fraser government and the whole ruling class. The necessity for even sharper attacks on the working class and its oppressed allies is clear, whatever the temporary turns in the political situation.

#### Leadership crisis of the workers movement

The role of the ALP and trade union leaderships has been vital to the ability of the Fraser government to attack working class wages, conditions, and democratic rights over the whole period since the coalition came to power.

The entire period has been characterised by a long retreat by ACTU President Bob Hawke and the other union tops before Fraser's attacks. At virtually every important stage, the ACTU has caved in and, moreover, moved to block any attempt at a fight back by sections of the workers movement. In fact, 1977 has probably been worse in this respect than 1976.

In July last year, the ACTU called its first ever national 24-hour strike—essentially in response to the massive outpouring of opposition by

workers in many cities, through strikes, demonstrations, and so on, to the liberals' move to destroy Medibank. This was an historic event, but it was followed up by a complete capitulation by the union bureaucracy, and the refusal to organise any national campaign to save Medibank.

This could only have emboldened Fraser, and in 1977 we have seen a stream of reactionary moves—none of which have resulted in any notable response from the official labor movement. The most potentially disastrous betrayal was that around the Industrial Relations Bureau in mid-year, when the ACTU special unions conference voted overwhelmingly to accept an IRB with "the same powers and processes" as the previous Arbitration Inspectorate. (These penal powers include fines of \$1000 for unions and \$400 or six months jail for union officials who break a bans clause in an award or other infringement.)

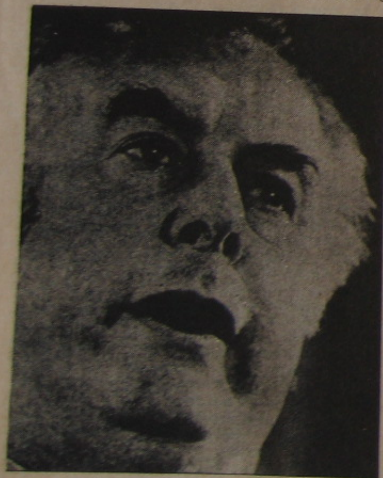
The most dangerous and treacherous aspect of this decision was its implied acceptance of the existence of penal clauses—the first time the unions had done so since the penal powers were frozen following the 1969 Clarrie O'Shea mobilisation. Now, Fraser is moving to substantially increase the powers and penalties of the IRB. The ACTU decision has opened the way for this.

On unemployment, the ALP and union bureaucracy both have been criminally in default. In the specific Australian context, in

**"On unemployment, the ALP and union bureaucracy have both been criminally in default. . . . the failure to take any action to prevent unemployment zooming to five, and more, per cent of the workforce is a historic betrayal."**

which relatively small levels of unemployment were traditionally considered the norm in the post-war era, the failure to take any action to prevent unemployment zooming to five, and more, per cent of the workforce is a historic betrayal. Under the Whitlam government, the union leadership actually collaborated in allowing unemployment to soar. But, even under Fraser, they have done nothing except make a few token complaints.

On wages, the ACTU has sat tight while plateau indexation has been allowed to seriously cut into real-wage levels. After every partial



ALP leaders past and present: Gough Whitlam and Bill Hayden. Despite leadership changeover, Labor's conservative, right-wing policies remain.

# SAVE JOBS

## Keep industry **HERE**

Authorised by The Metal Industry Unions



Protectionist sticker put out by metal unions.

indexation decision, the ACTU executive has invariably warned that indexation was finished. But the unions have continued to remain overwhelmingly within the indexation guidelines. Only in specific cases, and largely in isolation so far, have particular groups of workers taken action to break out of the wage-freeze stranglehold of the Arbitration Commission. However, especially in the latter half of this year, a number of very important struggles around wages have occurred, reflecting the development of a growing restiveness among a large section of the working class, and a new determination to fight among important layers of the labor movement.

This is a result of the increasing bite of the wage cuts over two years, and the more noticeable effects on living standards, and even such traditional spurs to wage struggle as compression of relativities, after a long period of plateau indexation. However, as in the Latrobe Valley power workers' dispute, Hawke and the union leaders generally have sought to direct such struggles into arguments on "anomalies," rather than to generalise the question to a head-on challenge to the whole concept of the indexation guidelines.

Again, the unions have taken no action against two years of "horror Budgets"—each of which slashed deeply into spending on education, public works, funds for Blacks, women, migrants, and youth, housing, and social services generally. With the demolition of Medibank, it seems that a high proportion of the social gains made under three years of Labor have now been taken back. In the face of this massive attack on the "social wage," the labor movement has done virtually nothing. The ACTU has done nothing to defend the most oppressed sections—Blacks, women, migrants, and youth—who have suffered worst under the Fraser offensive.

By this means, the labor bureaucracy have

allowed further divisions within the working class and between the workers and their allies to be fostered.

As for the ALP leadership, it too has capitulated completely before the ruling-class attacks. Instead of posing a class alternative, Whitlam, Hayden, and the rest have accepted the basic premise of the Fraser offensive—that the economic crisis necessitates a cut in living standards for the mass of the population—and have limited themselves to offering mild

**"Support for protectionism has emerged as a dangerous, widespread trend in the labor movement, including in the traditional 'left wing.' It will have to be fought down the line to defeat national chauvinism and promote proletarian internationalism."**

criticisms of Fraser's policies. For instance, the basic criticism of Fraser's Friedmanite assault on social spending from the Labor leadership has been for a mild dose of Keynesian reflation—ie, a "recovery" based on *moderately* increased consumer spending.

Of course, such measures offer no solution to the massive problems of unemployment and rising prices undercutting real wages which are the central problems for the working people. But the Labor leaders are merely interested in regaining the confidence of the capitalist class (or at least a sizeable section of it) for "another go" at government. The only lesson both

Whitlam and Hayden have drawn from the experience of 1972-75 is that Labor went "too far, too fast"!

The central problem facing revolutionary socialists and preventing the advance of the workers movement in this country is the continued hegemony of Social Democratic Laborism within the working class—both politically and industrially. The ALP and its industrial wing are a roadblock on the path to a socialist transformation of Australia.

This truth has been sharply underlined in the past two years—following the failure of reformism in government, and its failure to fight to defend itself after November 1975. But the course of the last two years has seen changes in the labor movement and a deepening of the crisis of leadership of the working class on a new scale.

The 1977 ALP conference in July and the ACTU congress in September (representing 50 years of the ACTU) showed up this developing crisis well. The ALP conference stepped further backwards on a whole series of policies—not least being the historic decision to formally ditch a commitment to full employment, a watering down of the Socialisation Objective, and adoption of a general go-slow policy. At the same time, the adoption of a moratorium policy on uranium was a step forward. It was the best indication of another trend in the labor movement—toward a radicalisation of the ranks and toward increasing demands that labor take a stand on this and other vital issues.

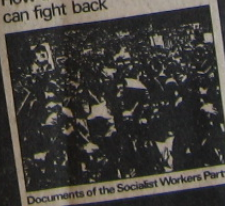
Perhaps the September congress of the ACTU best showed where things stand in the union movement today. It clearly marked a new stage in the long retreat of the union bureaucracy before the ruling-class offensive. It represented a consolidation of a "right-centre" bloc in control of the ACTU, represented by the Bob Hawke-John Ducker collaboration which dominated the congress. *Every* suggestion of *action*, no matter how modest, was knocked down by the executive and hence the congress. And on the central issue of debate, uranium, Hawke again won the day for a dangerous, do-nothing policy of abstinence which merely left the union movement disunited in the face of Fraser's drive to mine and export at any cost.

**"The combination of this protectionist drive and the general downturn in world trade has contributed to sharpening conflict between Australia and its major trading partners . . ."**

But, at the same time, the debate on uranium showed just how deeply the labor movement is split on this question, and how widespread is the feeling from the ranks against the mining and export of this dangerous material.

### Towards a **Socialist Australia**

How the labor movement  
can fight back



Documents of the Socialist Workers Party

Towards a Socialist Australia is a book for anyone who is interested in socialism and wants to know how it can come about.

This book lays bare the crisis affecting the Australian economy, the concerted offensive of the bosses and the Fraser government against working-class living standards, and the failure of the Labor Party and the ACTU leaders to mount a real defence of workers' rights and living standards.

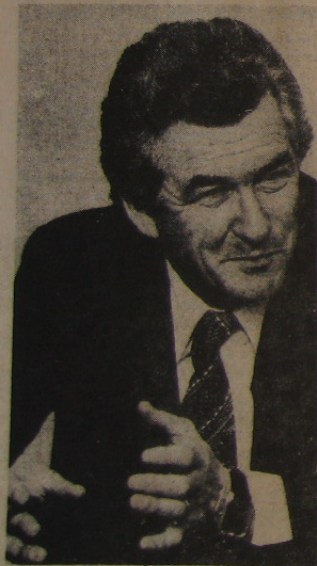
Towards a Socialist Australia argues that a fighting socialist program is necessary if working people and their allies are to avert the consequences of capitalism's decay—and it provides such a program.

170 pp, \$2.95. Order from Pathfinder Press, PO Box K208, Haymarket 2000 (postage free).

However, two years of open treachery by the ALP and ACTU tops have had their effects. Hawke's ability to pose as a "left-winger" has been virtually completely destroyed. He is now almost universally seen as a broker between the bosses and the workers. This has helped to create a feeling of distrust for him among wide layers of militants and the beginnings of a search for alternatives.

### The Rank-and-File Response: Beginnings of a Fightback

The overthrow of the Labor government and the coming to power of Fraser caused a massive upsurge among workers and the oppressed, particularly among youth. While the tempo of the radicalisation of the last two years has varied at different times, while there have been defeats as well as high points in this process of building an opposition to the Fraser government and its offensive, it has been a *continuing development*.



ACTU president Bob Hawke: a broker between the bosses and the workers.

Among working people generally, and even among sections of the middle classes, there is an increasing hostility to the austerity, high unemployment, and antidemocratic policies of the Fraser regime. This is shown by the opinion polls (although the failure of the ALP to fight has led to a swing back to the conservatives in the past couple of months). Even the capitalist media are carrying the message that the Fraser government is not being successful with its economic policies.

The last six months or so has seen a definite increase in workers' struggles, particularly around wages, but also around jobs and other issues. The Victorian petrol tanker drivers, the air traffic controllers, public transport workers, and now the Latrobe Valley power workers have been the most publicised of these struggles on wage questions.

**"Hawke's ability to pose as a 'left-winger' has been virtually completely destroyed. He is now almost universally seen as a broker between the bosses and the workers."**

But there have also been battles against layoffs by car workers, around the shorter working week by Redfern postal workers, and so on. In addition, we have seen determined struggles by transport workers in WA against the attempt to jail pickets—resulting in a retreat by the Court Liberal government. Similarly with the case of victimised Storemen and Packers organiser Ted Zaphir in Queensland.

These struggles, when they have occurred, have been despite the role of the union officials in most cases—most notably in the Latrobe Valley. Unfortunately, the relative isolation of these campaigns has so far been successfully achieved by Hawke and his colleagues.

There is not as yet any organised opposition on a wide scale to the policies of Hawke and the union tops. The beginnings are there in the role of shop stewards in the Latrobe Valley, for instance, and in similar cases elsewhere. This oppositional feeling is still largely unorganised, and still largely contained *politically* by the Labor Party.

In fact, a sizeable degree of political opposition to the Labor fakers will appear (and already has done to an extent) *inside* the ranks of the ALP. The ALP's policy on uranium, for instance, was prompted by the overwhelming opposition to uranium mining in the branches in

almost every State. While the influx of young people especially into the ALP and Young Labor after 1975 has possibly receded somewhat with the betrayals of the Labor leaders in the past two years, there are still thousands of youthful radicals, including young workers and students, who are interested basically not in backing Whitlam or Hayden but in defending the interests of the labor movement.

There is a degree of openness to radical and socialist ideas, and a questioning of the policies and role of the leaderships, which provides the basis for oppositional politics to make headway in the next period.

### Response among the allies of the working class

Among women and Blacks, it has taken a long time for the initial shock of Fraser's offensive to be overcome, following a period of moderate gains under the Labor government. We are now only beginning to see the beginnings of organisation toward a political response to the Fraser attacks.

Women have suffered badly in the last two years as the ruling class try to force them back out of the workforce and into the home again. They are being blamed for both unemployment and inflation by Fraser and his reactionary backers.

One indication of the beginning of a quest for ways to fight back was the success of the Working Women's Charter Conference this year following the successful initial working women's conference in 1976. Women are looking

for a method of fighting the attempts to victimise them, and want to find a means of winning support for their demands within the labor movement. The adoption of a Working Women's Charter at the ACTU congress in September was one sign that the demands of women are starting to make an impact in the affairs of the unions—although there is still a long, long way to go on this.

**"Women have suffered badly in the last two years as the ruling class try to force them back out of the workforce and into the home again. They are being blamed for both unemployment and inflation by Fraser and his reactionary backers."**

The stepped-up threat to abortion through the Hunt committee move to take abortion off Medibank, and the blockage of the abortion repeal bill in NSW, are a further challenge to the women's movement, indicating that further attacks are undoubtedly in the pipeline.

The most notable response among Blacks, following the severe cuts in government spending on Black programs and other setbacks under Fraser, has been a new rise in the land rights struggle and the establishment of Land Councils in several States and territories. Blacks have also



International Women's Day, Melbourne, 1978. Fraser's offensive aims to drive women out of workforce and back to the home.

begun to organise against racist attacks by police, courts, and landlords. We could finally be seeing the beginnings of a mass response by the Black community nationally.

### Building a Class-Struggle Left Wing

Class struggle politics are still very much in a minority in the labor movement right now. The hold of Social Democratic Laborism over even the militants in the workers movement is still overwhelming.

We are very much at an early stage of the development of a class struggle left wing today. We don't know what exact form it will take, or in what form class struggle tendencies, which together will make up such a class-struggle formation, will appear. What we have seen so far is the early beginnings of opposition to the class collaborationism of the labor leaders, often in a limited and unorganised form, but representing the beginnings of the consciousness that deals with the bosses and with the state do not protect the interests of the workers and the oppressed.

The concept of a class-struggle left wing is essentially a formula to describe the emergence of a mass-based opposition to the established leaderships and politics of reformism, both within the trade unions and the Labor Party. To establish such an opposition it will be necessary to challenge not only the ALP misleaders, but the Stalinist ones as well.

The false road of Australian nationalism, for instance, is being widely advanced at present, especially within the "left," in its crude form by the Maoists, in its more "veiled" form by the "Australo-Communists" of the CPA—through the People's Economic Program.

Support for protectionism has emerged as a dangerous, widespread trend in the Labor movement, including in the traditional "left wing." It will have to be fought down the line to defeat national chauvinism and to promote proletarian internationalism.

Some of the difficulties confronting class-struggle politics are shown by the short history of the Right to Work campaigns. It epitomises the treachery of the Labor fakery that no effort has been made as yet to organise the unemployed, or to fight Fraser on the question of jobs.

The hard going experienced by the Right to Work campaigns, including the negative role of the CPA, shows that—even in the face of a massive objective potential—a class-struggle tendency is still in its very early stages.

A class-struggle left wing will have to develop out of the struggles against the ruling class offensive, but at the same time confront the backsliding of both ALP and Stalinist leaderships.

Its method will be essentially that of a *united front* of all forces in the labor movement and among the oppressed who can be brought together around class-struggle politics. An excellent example of the potential of such a united front is the present anti-uranium campaign, which is uniting students, women, workers, environmentalists, etc, and is being organised through coalitions of all these groups and the organised labor movement.

It is by the generalisation of such struggles that a genuine, broad-based, class-struggle formation can be forged.

**"The concept of a class-struggle left wing is essentially a formula to describe the emergence of a mass-based opposition to the established leaderships and politics of reformism, both within the trade unions and the Labor Party."**

In this, of course, the role of the revolutionary-socialist forces—i.e. the Fourth Internationalists—is vital. *Only* a correct program backed by a party made up of cadres steeled in struggle is capable of leading class-struggle formations to success. This is the lesson of previous examples of class-struggle upsurges: the Socialisation Units of the NSW ALP in the early 1930s; the Socialist Left of the Victorian Labor Party in the early 1970s; the NSW Builders Laborers Federation up till 1975; the Australian Union of Students in the last couple of years (until recently); and so on.

Each of these examples involving class-struggle politics in one form or another was eventually defeated or derailed partly because revolutionary-socialist forces were non-existent or not strong enough. Today, the uranium campaign is a big test for the Trotskyist movement and a great opportunity for us.

We cannot predict the exact tempo of the class struggle or along precisely what lines key struggles may emerge. We can, however, see a continuing intensification of the class struggle in the coming year, and deepening crisis of leadership both for the ruling class and for the workers movement.

Revolutionary-socialists can hope to grow and strengthen their forces by a correct tactical intervention on the right kind of transitional program in the coming period.

## SWP sixth national conference

# Political report

by Jim McIlroy

I'd like to begin this political report by mentioning a few recent incidents which seem to sum up the kind of year we have in front of us in 1978.

1. On New Year's Day it was announced in the press that medical and hospital charges for the Hospital Contributions Fund—one of the biggest private health funds in the country, would be increased by almost 25 percent. This is despite assurances by the Fraser government before December 10 last that health charges would not be increased.

All private funds are likely to follow suit. Now heavy pressure is being placed by the funds on the government for an increase in the Medibank levy. It now seems very likely to be severely increased after July 1 this year.

This is consequence number one of the Fraser election victory.

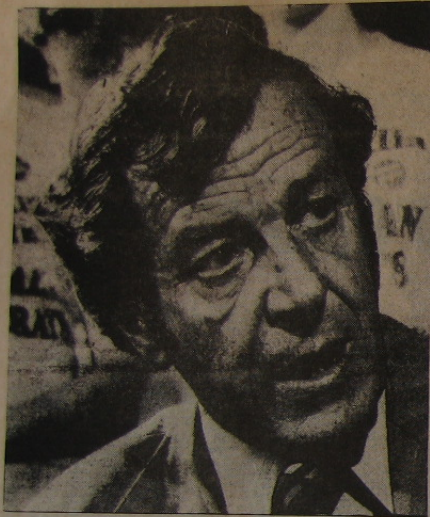
2. Last Friday, official unemployment figures for December were announced, the first time unemployment has passed the 400,000 figure since records were first kept in this country. A figure of 430,000 or 7 per cent has been predicted by senior government officials for January. Unemployment is virtually certain to rise still further in coming months.

This is consequence number two of the Fraser victory.

3. In the post-election Cabinet reshuffle, Fraser unceremoniously dissolved his show piece office of Women's Affairs into the body suitably entitled Home Affairs. This merely underlines, as the head of the Women's Office, Sara Dowse, said in her letter of resignation, that Fraser regards the interests of women as completely expendable.



Sydney postal drivers vote to remain out in recent strike.



Australian Democrats' leader Don Chipp.

This is consequence number three of Fraser's big win on December 10.

These incidents are only some immediate indicators of the harsh fact that 1978 is going to be a grim year for working people, the poor, and the oppressed in Australia. This reality must give new impetus to the reactionary ruling-class offensive we have experienced in the past two years.

Precisely what form new attacks will take in 1978 we cannot predict exactly. But we must be ready to confront a variety of new moves and the intensification of established ones to drive down living and working conditions, slash social welfare, and restrict democratic rights.

This is not to say that Fraser will not pursue varied tactics, including stepped-up attempts to collaborate with the ALP and trade union misleaders in carrying out these assaults. But the salient fact is that Fraser's hand has been strengthened in the initial instance. To a certain extent, in the short term at least, his ruling-class critics have been silenced by the government's big election win. Fraser is now, for the time being, in a *stronger* position than he was last year to carry out the centralised co-ordination of this

reactionary offensive. Moreover, Fraser will face an official labor movement even more heavily on the defensive following Labor's disastrous defeat in the elections.

This is one side of the political reality facing us in 1978 and a very harsh one it is too. But it is by no means the whole of the reality. And, as Marxists, we are obliged to carefully consider all the aspects of the situation.

I would like to analyse the main lessons of the election, and consider what pointers they give to the future, and what changes in the political situation will occur, or be hastened, by the election result. In doing so, I would point to the obvious fact that the election is the one major event not accounted for in the written political resolution, entitled: "Fighting the Fraser Offensive" which is before us today—and for the equally obvious reason that the resolution was written last October, before the election had even been called.

### Election result

In reality, I don't consider the result of the election in any way contradicts the major themes of this resolution. On the contrary, it gives added emphasis to them. (If Labor had won, on the other hand, we would have been in a rather different position, having to reassess our projections fairly extensively. But, true to our ALP Social Democrats' form as the historic major organisers of working class defeats in this country up till now, we don't have that problem at all.)

What we do have to explain is what happened in the election defeat and why, and what consequences flow from it for the workers' movement as a whole and for the revolutionary-socialist party.

I remember that *Direct Action/Militant* carried on (one of its) front pages at one point the big headlines: "LABOR CAN WIN!" Were we wrong to think that in the light of the result? I don't think so.

In fact, I rather liked the idea that our last cover headline for the year, in the issue immediately following the poll should have read something like: "CALL IN THE STEWARDS!" or "NOBBLED!" Basically, the Labor Party leaders threw the race. Which is not to say Labor would inevitably have won if the ALP had put in even a reasonable fighting campaign in their own, reformist terms. But at least that the result which was most widely predicted would have occurred: a large loss of seats for Fraser and a big boost for Labor (and consequently for the morale of the working class).

It has widely been suggested that significant sections of the Labor machine were not over-

anxious to win! Firstly, because they feared government in a situation of continuing economic slump, and secondly, because they wanted to get Whitlam out and Hayden in.

Now, we have repeatedly stated in the past that there were *no* basic political differences between Whitlam and Hayden. But it is true that by removing him and installing Hayden, together with a new right-wing dominated leadership across the board, the way is opened for an even more openly capitulationist and pro-big business course by the ALP in the immediate future. I'll say more on the developments in the Liberal Party a little later.

But let's consider the election result more closely. The coalition has been returned with less than 10 seats fewer than 1975 (I'm not sure of the exact final tally). Labor's vote was only 40 per cent—it's lowest ever—a truly disastrous showing!

The coalition's overall vote is down too—from 53 percent in 1975 to 48 percent this time. Most of this (and Labor's loss) went to Don Chipp's Australian Democrats, a new factor in the national political scene.

### Australian Democrats

The Australian Democrats are a *dangerous* development for the workers' movement in this country. As a small—"liberal" capitalist party, comparable to the Liberal Party in Britain, the Australian Democrats are a diversion from class politics and provide a vehicle for the channeling of the petit bourgeoisie, as well as white collar and professional sections of the working class, away from the Labor Party. This is a fundamentally backward step in the national political scene.

In some of its policies, notably the opposition to uranium mining virtually the Australian Democrats' only widely known policy the Australian Democrats have taken a superficially progressive stand. But when we consider the party's overall program, as advanced by Don Chipp in his campaign speech, we find the same anti-working class basis as for the Liberals themselves.

The success of the Australian Democrats in the December 10 poll (about ten per cent of the vote) indicates the complexity of the current political situation. Chipp won many votes from small businesspeople and better-off working class and professional elements on the basis of a reaction against the harshness of the Fraser regime, on the Australian Democrats' anti-uranium policy, and so on. We shouldn't forget this aspect of the situation.

That is, there is widespread disenchantment with the austerity policies of Fraser and his gang. But Chipp also won 2-3 per cent of the Labor

vote on the basis of the failure of the ALP to present a fighting alternative to the Liberals. This siphoning off of a social layer which *must* be won to the cause of working class politics by this petit-bourgeois "protest" party is a negative development—and a deep indictment of the treachery, the cravenness, the abject capitulationism of the official ALP leadership. The middle classes will always waver between the working class and the monopoly capitalist class, and only a strong, class-struggle policy by the workers' movement can win them to its side.

For us on the one hand, and the Social Democrats and their Stalinist allies on the other, the task in relation to these floating strata are quite different. They want to forge an alliance based on a petit-bourgeois program of class

**"... the Australian Democrats are a diversion from class politics and provide a vehicle for the channeling of the petit bourgeoisie, as well as white collar and professional sections of the working class, away from the Labor Party."**

collaboration. We, on the other hand, want to build a strong, united workers' movement which will draw the middle class and some small business elements into an alliance *on the terms of the working class*—by its obvious strength and determination to win the class battle.

This debate is at the heart of the vigorous programmatic struggle now opening up before us in the labor movement. Paradoxically, the abject failure of Social Democracy, underlined on December 10, provides further openings for revolutionary-socialists, i.e. the Trotskyist forces, to intervene and win recruits and influence in the labor movement in the next period. More on this later.

### Sure road to defeat

What did the election result show about the current political situation in Australia? First of all, the method of crawling to the bosses, as adopted by the Labor fakery is a sure road to defeat for the workers' movement.

The ALP's campaign policies were pitiful even by Labor standards. The payroll tax abolition (whatever the nature of the tax itself) was essentially aimed at attracting big business and the withdrawal of Lynch's so-called "tax cuts"

(given the fraud underlying them) gave the Liberals the heaven-sent opportunity to attack Labor ostensibly from the left.

When I saw that Liberal advertisement claiming that the ALP was taking money from the pockets of working people and giving it to big companies, I didn't know whether to laugh or cry. Labor was so right wing that people genuinely couldn't see any real difference between the policies of the two major parties.

In fact, Fraser claimed afterwards, and rightly I think, that many voters actually considered the Liberals "strategy" for overcoming unemployment (by first "conquering" inflation) a more successful means of reducing the unemployment figures than Labor's mild inflationary measures. (The Liberals successfully played on Labor's past record—when unemployment zoomed in the period 1974-75.)

On every policy point, Whitlam and Co retreated. They came out against full wage indexation. They refused to put forward effective measures to create jobs in large numbers. They played the uranium issue right down in the campaign. Moreover, the whole campaign was aimed at demobilising Labor supporters. Few public meetings were held, and those that were were poorly publicised. The whole campaign was run like selling soap powder—in the hands of an advertising agency. The tone of the campaign was set right from the start when it was launched not, as usually, in a place like the Blacktown Town Hall in a working class area of Sydney, but in the Sydney Opera House, in a performance directed almost solely at the media. Even Fraser's campaign launching was more effective! The Liberals' campaign was again, as in 1975, one of conscious deception and distortion. They said nothing about their real intentions on jobs,

wages, social welfare, even uranium was played down—Fraser could see from the direction of the opinion polls that this was a potential losing issue for the coalition. Deception won the day.

But, despite this, we were not wrong to point to the possibility of a Labor win as the campaign got under way—with the swings to Labor evident in the Greensborough by-election and in the Queensland state election. There was a swing to Labor shown in the polls at the time. The Labor fakers threw away their chance by their right-wing approach.

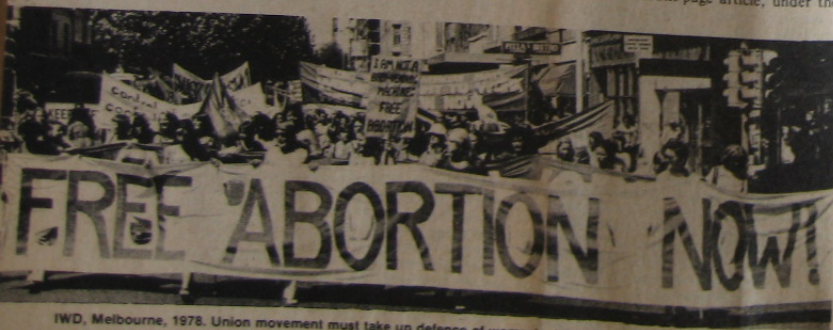
The mass movements around uranium underlined by the massive October 22 actions, the civil liberties campaign in Brisbane, the heroic struggle of the Latrobe Valley strikers showed the reservoir of combativity that exists in wide sections of the working class and its allies.

The SWP and the CL in our intervention in the election campaign, unfortunately not through our own candidates but mainly through our propaganda (essentially our press), stressed continually the need for a fighting campaign—for Labor to break from its class-collaborationist course and adopt socialist policies—the only policies which could give impetus to the campaign, provide a real alternative to working people and their allies.

### Communist Party

The Communist Party of Australia ran in the elections with a very moderate campaign indeed. But the astounding thing about the CP is not their campaign but their interpretation of the election result.

In a post-election statement by the National Officers of the Communist Party of Australia published as the front-page article, under the



IWD, Melbourne, 1978. Union movement must take up defence of women's rights.



## From Class Society to Communism

By Ernest Mandel

What are the economic roots of social inequality? Where do profits come from? How did the modern labor movement develop? Why is a socialist revolution necessary to liberate the working class? How does bureaucracy develop in the labor movement? What is the nature of states such as the USSR, China, and those in Eastern Europe? How would a society managed by the workers run itself? What is the role of the revolutionary party? What are the scientific methods of Marxism—dialectical and historical materialism?

From Class Society to Communism is a comprehensive yet simply written book that gives clear answers to these questions.

190 pages, cloth \$10.50, paper \$4.50. Order from: Pathfinder Press, PO Box K208, Haymarket, 2000 (postage free).

heading "What the Election Means," in the December 18, 1977, issue of *Tribune*, this analysis is spelt out.

After referring to Labor's "lacklustre campaign," the "failure of most unions to get into the fight," and "confusion caused by different policies expressed on taxes, wages, and tariffs," we get to the nitty-gritty.

Under the sub-heading, "Australian Conservatism: 'looking after number one,'" they write: "But not everything should be attributed to Labor's failures and its refusal to put forward more left or socialist policies.

*The fact must be faced that Australia is a conservative society.* [Emphasis in original.]

"Many working class people are affected by this conservatism and the capitalist system's values of 'looking after number one' in disregard of social needs."

"Unfortunately, the masses are not yet yearning for socialism," the statement continued.

And, in an accompanying article, headed: "The Communist Party must dig in," we find the statement, "The Party faces a long haul, the need to 'dig in' in localities, mass movements and workplaces."

The party's new program, it continued, *A New Course for Australia*, "does not focus on 'ultimate' solutions, when the 'ultimate'—politically at least—is further away than ever."

Here is expressed in a pure form the anti-Marxist, counter-revolutionary theory of Stalinism—the failure of the masses, the need to

go slow, etc. etc. This is the kind of analysis one would expect to read in *The Weekend Australian* or in a third-rate political science journal.

Here we have the penetrating analysis of the major party of Australian Stalinism: Labor lost because Australians are "naturally conservative."

... the basis of the Labor Party's approach has been virtual acceptance of the basic premise of Fraser and the ruling class offensive—that the economic crisis necessitates a cut in living standards for the majority of the population."

We should seize on this "analysis," counterpose it to our own—that is our "revolutionary optimism" based not on simple-minded hopes but on scientific analysis of history.

We know that Australia, like world capitalism, cannot in any way solve its basic problems, under Fraser or any other capitalist government. We know that Labor's treachery, not only in this election campaign but over a period of many years, contributed most importantly to this defeat.

According to a post-election editorial in the

*Sydney Morning Herald*, the election was "A vote against socialism." (The CPA Stalinists seem to agree with this analysis!) But nothing could be further from the truth.

"Socialism" was never an issue in this election. Labor ran its *most right-wing campaign*, in my memory anyway. Even the timid reforms of the 1972 period were put in mothballs.

No, the election was a defeat for Social Democracy, not socialism.

According to the Stalinists, socialists should "dig in," go underground for the long haul to socialism. I think we should take precisely the opposite approach: now is the time to "launch out" in a massive propaganda offensive for socialism.

I take great heart from a survey published in *The Australian* shortly before the election showing voting intention by age. It showed a remarkably high majority support for Labor among 18-21 year olds, with a tapering off generally with increased age. This is the reality of the future which we should be orienting toward, in contrast to the "counter-revolutionary pessimism" of the Stalinists and Labor fakery.

The election debacle will almost certainly

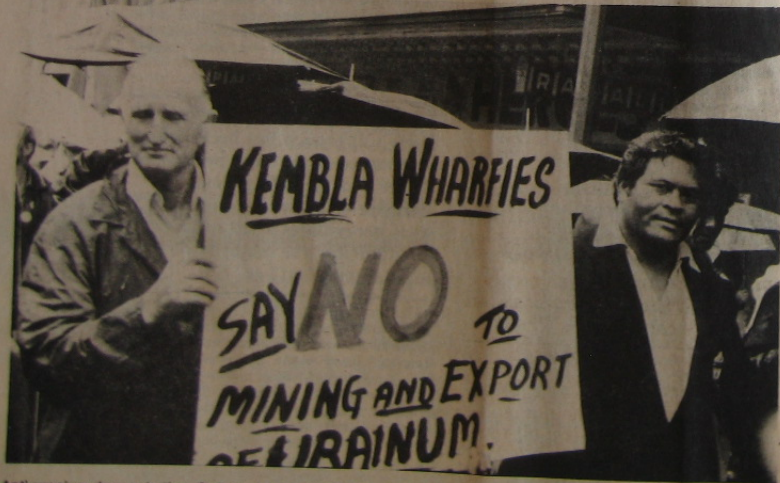
accelerate debate within the ranks of the ALP and the unions on the way forward. The ousting of Tom Uren as Deputy Opposition Leader and Arthur Gietzelt as Deputy Leader in the Senate has been widely presented as a defeat for the Labor "left."

Undoubtedly, the consolidation of the "new right" in the leadership of the ALP (the Hayden-Bowen axis) means an even more conservative line than before (if such a thing is possible).

The right may be consolidating itself in the Party machine, temporarily at least. But I don't think the rank and file in the ALP branches are going to like it. Now is the chance for a big fight to begin in the ALP. I don't say it will, but it will if we can help it along the way at all.

The opportunity for presenting the socialist alternative must be seized with both hands. We are now in a good position to say: "Look where a right-wing line has led Labor. Into disaster. The only real alternative is a fighting, mass approach around class-struggle policies. Fight for a genuine workers government, not for this class treachery!"

Graham Freudenberg, Whitlam's speech writer, has written a biography of Whitlam entitled: *A Certain Grandeur*.



Anti-uranium demonstration, Sydney, April 1, 1978. Labor played down issues such as uranium in election which led to erosion of support.

He has to be joking! What has been grand about the record of the Whitlam years. Riding to office on the backs of an anti-Vietnam war movement he did everything to knife, not to build. Beginning a program of moderate reforms, but dropping them under the impact of the worldwide recession. Refusing to fight in November 1975, and then leading Labor to disaster in December 1977.

We draw up quite a different balance sheet of the past period than the apologists for the Labor fakery. And now is the time to make that balance sheet—and, moreover, to present it to the most radicalised sections of the working class and its allies, urging them to learn from that experience and take the revolutionary road.

### Character of period

At this point I would like to step back for a while and argue for the general correctness of our analysis of the character of this period, of the Fraser offensive, and the developments in the labor movement, as summarised in the written political resolution which is before us today.

In order to see the way forward we need an analysis of the past period and the main dynamics of the class struggle. I think our draft resolution "Fighting the Fraser Offensive" provides that analysis *in summary form*.

I consider it extremely significant that the general line of this resolution was adopted unanimously at the joint national committee meeting of the CL-SWP last October. It indicates that there is a real convergence of views on the character of this period and the main lines of the tasks before us.

**"Here is expressed in pure form the anti-Marxist, counterrevolutionary theory of Stalinism—the failure of the masses, the need to go slow . . . Labor lost because Australians are 'naturally conservative.'"**

This resolution does not go deeply into *all* the questions which concern us, it does not repeat *all* the detail of the analysis carried in the previous resolutions of the SWP and the CL on the recent political situation. In this context I urge all comrades to refer to the political documents of the past SWP conferences printed in our book, *Towards a Socialist Australia*. CL documents are no doubt available in past bulletins.

I would like to run through the main points in the resolution before us to refresh comrades' memories, and then proceed to look at some of the major political questions facing us as we go into 1978.

The resolution begins with a section: "The Fall of Labor: Why Fraser Was Brought to Power." It explains the upsurge which carried Labor into government in December, 1972, supported by a

**"On every policy point, Whitlam and Co retreated. They came out against full indexation. They refused to put forward effective measures to create jobs in large numbers. They played the uranium issue right down in the campaign."**

considerable section of the ruling class which saw an ALP government as one capable of carrying out some key structural reforms in internal and external relations, and of restoring faith in the system after the 23 years of unbroken coalition rule.

It points out that the Labor leaders hopes of peacefully reforming the system were smashed by the onset of the 1974 international recession which immediately plunged the Australian economy into its greatest post-war crisis.

It notes that the Labor government tried everything to put the brakes on working class gains, that the Hayden cutback Budget of August 1975 was the *beginning* of the ruling class offensive as a whole and an unsuccessful attempt to regain favor from the ruling class.

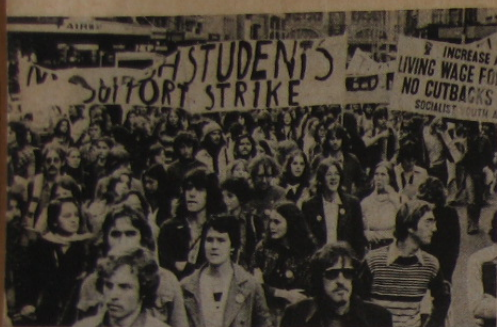
The next section of the resolution summarises: "The Fraser Offensive in 1977." Basically, I think we can predict that the main thrust of Fraser's attack will continue into 1978 but with the government in a temporarily stronger position than before. However, as we will see that is bound not to last.

The resolution then takes up the central issue of *unemployment*, explaining that this has been the chief weapon of the capitalist class against living standards and working conditions. As we have seen with the latest figures, the Fraser government has consciously increased the jobless pool to the highest level since the 1930s depression—and this is likely to continue this year.

Youth have been particularly hard hit 55 per cent of the jobless are under 25, making Australia second only to Italy in its rate of youth







Fraser offensive has borne down heavily on students and youth generally.

potentially disastrous betrayal of 1977" being the acceptance without a fight of the formation of Fraser's Industrial Relations Bureau as an industrial police to enforce the penal powers of the Arbitration Act. While the deal at the time was that the IRB was to have "the same powers and processes" as the previous Arbitration Inspectorate, Fraser later began preparations to increase these powers.

In any case, the existing powers (including fines of \$1,000 for unions or \$400 or six months jail for union officials who "infringe" an award) are quite harsh enough. They were sufficient to jail Clarrie O'Shea in 1969—provoking the biggest industrial explosion in modern times in this country!

We said at the time of the ACTU special conference in June last year that acceptance of the IRB would put the unions on a slippery slope to greater repression—and it was the very acceptance of penal powers in principle by the unions (for the first time since the 1969 confrontation) which constituted the great betrayal by Hawke and Co.

The resolution notes the criminal failure of the union and ALP leaderships over the key area of unemployment. What could better underline this cop-out than the historic backward step taken by the ALP national conference in Perth in July last year when it virtually redefined the traditional (since World War Two) labor movement depiction of full employment to a level of 4-5 per cent. Traditionally, a two per cent unemployment level has been virtually enough by itself to bring a government down (eg Menzies' close shave in 1961 and McMahon's collapse as recently as 1972). Failure in 1977 is tribute to the political failure of labor.

## Protectionism

Under Labor virtually nothing was done to rock the boat over mass sackings. And now, even under the hated Fraser regime, the unions have confined themselves to a bit of whinging. Plus, and this is an important plus, the revival of a reactionary advocacy of protectionism as an alleged defence of jobs. The question of protectionism is now reaching centre stage as an issue in the Australian labor movement (as well as internationally).

In virtually every major case of large scale layoffs in recent times, such as the ship-building industry, the car industry, the metal and textile trades, etc, the response of the union leaderships has been to call for increased tariffs and quotas to "protect Australian jobs." The role of the Stalinist and Social Democratic left has been, if anything, worse in this regard.

We Trotskyists are virtually the only ones taking a principled stand, in line with the tradition of Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Rosa Luxemburg on this question.

Our debate with the CPA Stalinists over the People's Economic Program (PEP) centred on this question. Protectionism has now come to be seen as the alternative to a class-struggle fight over jobs—to a vigorous, national campaign for an immediate 35-hour week throughout industry without loss of pay; to the demand for a massive program of socially useful public works, to provide large numbers of jobs; to call for nationalisation under workers' control of companies which threaten or carry out layoffs.

The struggle over protectionism vs class-struggle defence of jobs is becoming one of the key political focuses which will determine the future development of the workers' movement in this country. We must win this in the long run or there will be no mass class-struggle defence of workers' interests at all.

On social welfare, apart from the Medibank campaign which was torpedoed in 1976, there have been no further struggles of great importance by the organised labor movement. This is despite two horror Budgets, and a protracted assault on education, public works, spending on programs for women, Blacks, migrants, and youth. It seems that a great majority of the social gains made under Labor have been or are being demolished. Undoubtedly, the next year will see a stepping up even further of these cutbacks coming under the heading of "austerity."

The ACTU and the ALP have done nothing to really take up the defence of those super-oppressed groups hardest hit by the Fraser offensive.

And as the document points out, the basis of the Labor Party's approach has been virtual

acceptance of the basic premise of the Fraser and ruling class offensive—"that the economic crisis necessitates a cut in living standards for the majority of the population."

As the resolution states, the ALP leaders have learnt their own lesson of 1972-75—that Labor went "too far, too fast!"

Well, it seems that "the lesson" they have learnt from the 1977 election debacle is that they should slow the breakneck speed of the social advances advocated in the Labor program even more!

Bill Hayden, who seems to epitomise, even personally, this viewpoint, thinks the ALP should be more "responsible." I recently confirmed with the visiting New Zealand comrades that Hayden is rather like NZ Labor Party leader Bill Rowling—as dynamic and exciting as a grey plastic raincoat!

It goes on to briefly sum up the two major labor movement events of 1977—the July ALP conference and the September ACTU Congress—celebrating 50 years of the ACTU. Well, I don't think Australian workers are celebrating! A more inauspicious way to mark a half century of the national trade union federation would be hard to find!

**"Under Labor virtually nothing was done to rock the boat over mass sackings. And now, even under the hated Fraser regime, the unions have confined themselves to a bit of whinging. Plus . . . the revival of a reactionary advocacy of protectionism as an alleged defence of jobs."**

As the resolution notes, the Congress "clearly marked a new stage in the long retreat of the union bureaucracy before the ruling class offensive."

The ACTU Congress failed to stand up on any issue—unemployment, uranium, wages (which didn't even get onto the floor of the congress!) and so on. Even where some progress was made, such as the adoption of a Working Women's Charter, the key area of abortion rights was omitted.

As for the ALP conference earlier, it reaffirmed the shift of the ALP brass away from even a formal commitment to "socialism" with the further watering down of the Socialisation Objective, the treachery over unemployment, and a backtracking on Medibank and other

major social welfare policies.

Just when the objective need is greatest for a firm stand by the leading bodies of the labor movement against the Fraser attacks, they go into even more frantic retreat. We can see that the Trotskyist concept of the "crisis of leadership of the working class" is not an abstraction—it means in real terms TODAY that the workers and their allies are being sold down the river to their enemies. If this crisis is not resolved then further, and perhaps more major, defeats will be suffered in the next period.

The final sections of the resolution deal very briefly with the other side of the equation: the response of the rank and file of the labor movement and its allies.

1977 saw a series of determined struggles by particular sections of the working class over wages, jobs, and other issues; most notable were the Victorian petrol tanker drivers, air traffic controllers, public transport workers, and of course the Latrobe Valley power workers. Other issues included the fight for a shorter working week at the Redfern Mail Exchange in Sydney, around lay-offs in the car industry, and so on.

These struggles have indicated growing restiveness among important sections of the working class at the attacks on living standards over the last two years and determination among some of them at least to fight even in spite of their misleaders' pressure to hold back.

The beginnings of rank and file organisation was shown in the key role of Latrobe Valley shop stewards in that strike.

## Allies of working class

Doubly oppressed sections such as women and Blacks have been especially hard hit by the Fraser offensive. For instance, at the time when unemployment among male workers was 4.4 per cent, it was 6.6 per cent among female workers. And it is well known that Black unemployment varies from about an average of 40 per cent to a high of 80 per cent or more in some country areas.

The women's movement, like the labor movement itself, has suffered some degree of shell-shock over the severity of Fraser's attacks. It is only gradually beginning to reorganise, and beginning to fight back. At the same time, the political lessons of the Labor government period and the necessity for a policy of mass struggle by women, in alliance with the workers' movement, is now beginning to become more apparent.

The Working Women's Charter Conference was a good follow-up to the one in 1976, and the development of new vehicles of struggle to protect women's rights, and to drive the demands of women into the unions and the ALP, is

continuing. We can expect further important developments in this vital struggle in 1978.

As far as Blacks are concerned, the main struggle of 1976-77 has been around land rights. The formation of land councils in several States has advanced this movement considerably—but gains so far have been rather limited.

Migrants, too, have begun to organise against the racist oppression they face, with defence of ethnic radio and migrant education being prominent issues.

1978 will be a key year for the rights of the specially oppressed. Success in defending these rights is closely related to the whole problem of a fight back by the working class itself.

As we have always said, the demands and aspirations of the specially oppressed can and must play a key role in the general radicalisation and politicisation of the working class generally. More than ever, with Fraser using divide-and-rule tactics ever more aggressively, the mobilisation of women, Blacks, migrants, and youth in their own interests—and the forging of an alliance with the most powerful sections of the labor movement—is the key to resistance to the ruling class offensive.

The final section of the resolution is entitled: "Building a Class-Struggle Left Wing."

All the struggles we have considered and more importantly, future bigger ones, are the currents which represent the embryo of a broad oppositional movement to Fraser and to the system he represents so accurately.

In so many different areas, the beginnings of a new approach to the problems of the workers and the oppressed has appeared. We characterise the approach of mass struggle, of class against class, of refusal to allow the burden of capitalism's crisis to be placed on the backs of the workers and the oppressed as the early stage of the development of a broad-based left-wing—a CLASS STRUGGLE LEFT WING IN THE LABOR MOVEMENT.

I'd like now to proceed to deal with a number of the key political questions facing the workers' movement (and ourselves) which will be vital in determining the direction of the class struggle in 1978 and the prospects for class struggle formations developing and growing in this period.

## Uranium

The issue of uranium mining and export has become one of the central axes of the class struggle in Australia today—and internationally as well.

Fraser and his ruling-class backers are determined to send off the country's uranium come hell or high water. The coalition strategy

for recovery is firmly bound up with uranium export—Fraser and Anthony have put their prestige on the line over this issue.

I won't go into any great detail over this issue since we have a special report on it tomorrow.

But it is important to stress how critical the development of this struggle will be for the political relationship of forces. In a sense, we have our best chance to deal Fraser and his backers a devastating blow on this issue. It is a relatively clear-cut one (despite the attempts of the Uranium Producers' Forum and others to confuse the issue with pseudo-science).

The drive to mine and export uranium is a clear demonstration of the inhumanity, the ruthless money-grubbing callousness of imperialism. The polls have shown an increasing opposition to uranium mining in Australia, to an extent that it appeared a losing issue to Fraser—and where a majority is now within striking distance for the anti-uranium movement (42 per cent earlier this year).

**"For Fraser the role of Hawke is crucial. His strategy of brinkmanship depends on pushing, pushing, pushing—to the point of confrontation without, so far, going over the edge—meanwhile seeing how much ground can be won from the workers and their allies."**

It is an issue which has deeply divided the labor movement, and in which there is a clear split between the rank and file and the labor bureaucrats. For instance, it is well known that the ALP conference adopted its uranium position only after heavy pressure from within the branches and against the previous views of a majority of the ALP leaders.

The current move by Bob Hawke to conduct a "weighted" ballot of all union members directly engaged in uranium production or transport is an attempt to sidetrack the struggle. After winning his cop-out referendum without a commitment to oppose uranium at the ACTU congress, Hawke is now moving to implement the second part of the ACTU resolution in such a way as to increase his chances of "arranging" a solution suitable to his "head," not to his "heart."

By using an undemocratic, weighting of the vote (the basis of which hasn't even been explained) Hawke is apparently hoping to

hoodwink not only union members in the industry, but all working people.

Whatever the result of this "weighted" ballot it mustn't be permitted to derail the anti-uranium campaign, which has already produced the greatest mass mobilisation since the Vietnam Moratorium.

This uranium struggle looks like being the first great test case of the Fraser government's strategy after the recent election. We can take great confidence from the fact that this issue is *not* going away, that internationally it is moving centre stage in so many countries as a centre piece for the survival of the whole profit system.

We see the building of a massive anti-uranium movement as one of the key priorities of our work in 1978.

## The attack on civil liberties in Queensland:

Now we come to the question which has been the most controversial in our discussion over the last few months: the situation in Queensland.

I think it is extremely important to analyse the Queensland situation carefully and situate it clearly within the whole framework of national politics today.

The Bjelke-Peterson National-Liberal government has consistently pursued the most reactionary line in the country on a number of questions: the racist Queensland Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders Acts, for instance. Because of the extreme gerrymander enforced by Bjelke-Petersen such policies can be carried out despite the fact that they are supported by only a small minority of the Queensland population.

This puts the Bjelke-Petersen regime in a special position of being able to carry out drastic attacks on the unions and on democratic rights generally without being so subject to popular dissent as a result.

In many respects, the Queensland situation is special for this reason, and because of the particular character of Bjelke-Petersen himself, who even comes into continual disagreement with Liberal and NCP politicians on a national and State level.

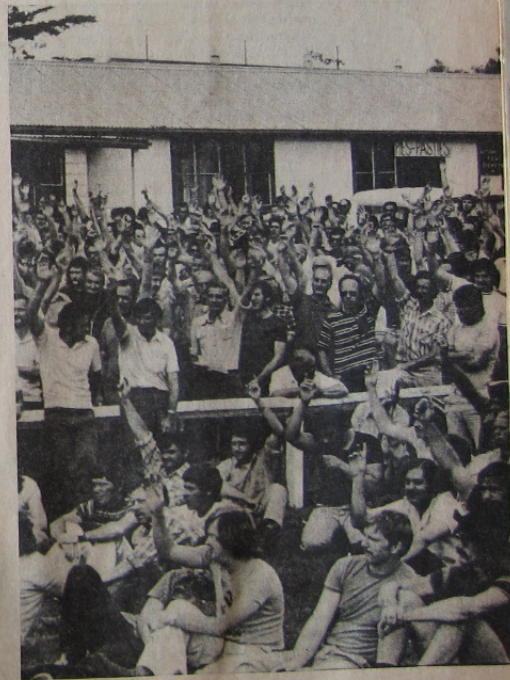
But in its most important aspect, the Queensland situation is integrally part of the nation-wide ruling class offensive. Bjelke-Petersen acts as a vanguard in some respects, but Charles Court, Dick Hamer, and of course, Fraser himself have shown the way on a whole series of reactionary policies and actions (eg arrest of the Transport Workers Union pickets, Newport, Latrobe Valley, etc).

It is in this context that we must see the current struggle to defend civil liberties in Queensland. The ban on political marches by Bjelke-Petersen

is a more severe action of this type than has yet been taken anywhere else. But it is a test case on civil rights for the rest of the country—a victory for Bjelke-Petersen would set a valuable precedent for the ruling class nationally.

For this reason, the fight to defend civil rights and specifically, in the first instance, to win back the right to march, is an issue of national importance—and should be taken as a national priority by our movement.

In this light, I would stress the importance of the policy adopted in the statement of the political committees of the SWP and the CL on Queensland, published in the December 15 *Direct Action*.



Latrobe Valley powerworkers in 1977 strike. Government saw strike as "battlefield."

It is quite clear that the campaign will have to be a continuing one. Despite noise from the Queensland Liberals there is no immediate sign of a let-up on the ban—and we cannot afford to rely on any such development occurring from within ruling class circles.

Instead we must give all possible help to our Queensland comrades in their important involvement in the campaign to defend civil liberties there—and we must take whatever national action we can to build support in other States for the right to march in Queensland.

## ASIO

Another important area of democratic rights under threat relates to the likely stepped up operations of ASIO in 1978.

Shortly before the elections, Fraser promised to boost the operations of ASIO to counter the influence of "extremist parties" in the labor movement.

This is particularly ominous in the light of the Hope Report into intelligence services which was released last October, and whose recommendations were immediately endorsed by Fraser.

Hope's recommendations seriously increase the powers of ASIO to legally harass and spy on the left and labor movements. Specific powers include interception of telex and teleprinter messages as well as telephone communications, opening of houses and offices, payment of bribes to informers, and increased access to government files.

In reality, we know, even from our own experience, that these "dirty tricks" are already being carried out, secretly and illegally. And Hope himself admits it in the report. But the

result of Hope's report will be easier access to these methods, increased funds available to make ASIO more "efficient" in attacking democratic rights, and giving a further boost to the general assault on civil liberties epitomised by Bjelke-Petersen's march ban.

This general assault on civil rights is a key part of the Fraser strategy to inflict defeats on the working class and drive down living standards.

From the point of view of our own party, this move to strengthen ASIO has serious implications. It also means the likelihood of incidents of harassment and surveillance against other labor and left organisations. We must be prepared to take whatever steps necessary to defend ourselves and others in the face of this likely serious escalation of secret police activity.

The mass demonstrations in New Zealand recently when Prime Minister Muldoon moved to increase powers of the Security Intelligence Service indicate the possibilities of the situation if Fraser overplays his hand.

## Union rights

A third serious attack on democratic rights which is virtually certain to escalate in 1978 is the restriction of union rights. We already saw the formation of the IRB and the passage of the Commonwealth Employees Act last year.

This year the IRB is likely to become more active in intervening against unions engaged in industrial activity. This could well become the basis for a significant mass campaign this year.

Already, late last year, the passage of the CEA provoked the largest demonstrations of public servants yet seen in this country.

While none of these new powers has been fully used against a union or section of a union



Civil liberties march in Brisbane, October 12, 1977. Only development of massive movement will win back right to march.

yet, 1978 could well be the year. In a situation of temporarily enhanced political strength coming out of the election, Fraser may decide to experiment with use of penal powers once again, to see if they can be revived successfully.

A test case around the new anti-union powers of the Trade Practices Act is now in train in Queensland—with an injunction having been taken out by the mining monopoly Utah against the Seamen's Union over a ban by the union on coal exports by the company in support of demands for employment.

According to the January 6 *Financial Review*, "the injunction hearing next month will be viewed as a test case by both the union movement and the employers." Other injunctions under Section 45D are reported to be in the pipeline also.

This is merely an indication of what is to come. Defence of union rights—the right to strike, to picket, to carry out boycotts and bans, to impose the closed shop—are all under challenge at present in one or another part of the country. Traditional union rights fought for over a century or more are now in jeopardy under this Fraser-led offensive. 1978 may well see a major test case explode into something like a Clarrie O'Shea case. This, of course, depends on many factors including the role of Hawke and Co.

But we ourselves should also be ready to play what role we can in defending these vital basic rights of trade unionism.

## Unemployment

With record unemployment now (400,000

plus) and worse to come, the jobless crisis is now the most severe issue affecting living standards generally. It is likely however (despite recent noises from NSW Premier Neville Wran) that very little action will come from the official labor movement on the question this year.

For youth, the question is especially critical—55 per cent of unemployed under 25—a whole generation is coming out of schools without hope of work. A major social crisis for the system building up a big explosion for the future.

## Wages

Fraser has given sign of attempting to impose an even harsher wage freeze in 1978—demands for nil wage indexation are growing sharper from non-Labor governments and bosses in the Arbitration Commission.

Yet, as wage cuts bite deeper, even as wage anomalies grow, pressure for industrial action on wages and against indexation guidelines is bound to increase. Air traffic controllers, Latrobe Valley, etc. are signs of possibly even bigger struggles to come.

Rank and file and shop steward organisation is likely to become more prominent in a situation where the official union leaderships shift even further to the right.

The problem is to create conditions for a greater generalisation of wage struggles, growth of solidarity between different sections, and the winning of a key demand in a key area such as the metal trades.

As we note in the resolution, while setbacks



Bjelke-Petersen's police prepare to enforce ban against street marches.

have been suffered and ideological inroads have been made, workers are still not ready to accept the idea that massive cuts in living standards should be allowed to occur without a fight.

Struggles by women, Blacks, migrants, and students will be an important catalyst of the political situation. All of these sections face special forms of attack from Fraser and as yet have not been able to organise a large-scale fight back (with the partial exception of students).

This is hardly surprising when we consider that the labor movement itself has been largely paralysed over the past two years under Fraser's onslaught.

One issue of special importance to women and gays will be the possible controversy around the recently released Human Relations Commission report.

**“ . . . the role of the Trotskyist forces is vital if correct leadership is to be given to any class struggle tendencies which do develop in this period. We must drive deeply into the Labor Party and the unions, in so far as our forces permit, to carry this message to the ranks.”**

Abortion will be a key struggle with the possibility of a revival of Right to Life activity in the wake of Fraser's victory.

For Blacks, the ability of the Land Councils to mobilise Black committees in support of their demands will be key.

For students, further attacks on education seem virtually certain. AUS faces a major task in defending TEAS; teachers and students could well move into action around threats to schools.

### Propaganda battle

I'd like to finish with a point on the propaganda battle over *socialism vs reformism*. To take up a point made earlier, we have quite a different interpretation of the tasks facing socialists than the “dig-in” conception of the CPA.

True, we need to take into account the defensive position now faced by the labor movement in the face of Fraser's electoral success. But we understand that no deeper problem of the ruling class has been solved by this victory. Economically, the prospects are for further deterioration, not success, for Fraser's

efforts, in the context of continued international gloom.

But we consider that now is precisely the time to *launch out* with our *propaganda offensive* for the socialist alternative. At the very time when the shock of Labor's defeat is fresh in the minds of workers and the oppressed; when the widespread feeling is that the ALP could hardly have pursued a more right-wing campaign; when disillusionment in the Labor leadership and its program is at its height; *now* precisely, is the time to stress the need for class struggle policies as the only *genuine* alternative.

As we note at the end of the resolution, the role of the Trotskyist forces is vital if correct leadership is to be given to any class-struggle tendencies which do develop in this period. We must drive deeply into the Labor Party and the unions, in so far as our forces permit, to carry this message to the ranks.

Both the ALP and the Stalinist misleaders have been thrown into disarray by Labor's election defeat. It certainly won't affect us that way.

James P. Cannon said: “If you live right, you deserve a break.” Well, if we live right, if we intervene strongly in all the areas of the class struggle we can possibly reach, with our new, united party of the Fourth International, taking advantage of the political openings available and the likely receptivity of many workers and others to our ideas, then we might get that break.

This is the challenge facing our party in the critical year ahead.



# Join the SYA!

The Socialist Youth Alliance is a national organisation of radical-minded youth who want to unite all youth against their common enemy: the capitalist system and those who benefit from it.

It is these people who want to mine and export uranium. It is these people who own the factories and other workplaces and will not give work to people because they say they cannot afford it. It is these people who want more money to be spent on arms and less on schools, hospitals, colleges, and universities.

To rid ourselves of these menaces we need a strong, unified organisation, run democratically and capable of waging campaigns against injustice and inequality.

If you would like to join the SYA, or would like more information, write to the closest branch:

ADELAIDE: 287 RUNDLE ST., ADELAIDE, 5000. PH 2234539  
BRISBANE: GPO BOX 1306, BRISBANE, 4000. PH 2214854  
GEELONG: PO BOX 1057, GEELONG, 3220. PH 96434  
HOBART: GPO BOX 888J, HOBART. PH 347913  
MELBOURNE: GPO BOX 2627X, MELBOURNE. PH 4194528  
NEWCASTLE: BARRY MARSH, 12 PARNELL PLACE, NEWCASTLE SYDNEY. 139 ST JOHN'S RD. GLEBE. PH 6606672  
WOLLONGONG: MICK COSTA, C/- WOLLONGONG UNIVERSITY SRC

Pages from our radical past

# The IWW and the fight against imperialist war

by Gordon Adler



IWW meeting in Sydney's Domain, May Day, 1914. Donald Grant is speaking; Tom Barker is on his left, holding Direct Action.

The Industrial Workers of the World arose as an organised tendency in Australia in 1907.

The movement had originated in the United States, and embodied the doctrines of the American socialist agitator Daniel de Leon. The IWW was founded in Detroit in 1905. It emerged as an international movement dedicated to the overthrow of the capitalist system.

Its implantation in Australia was described by labor writer and historian Vere Gordon Childe in his book *How Labour Governs* (Melbourne: MUP, second edition, 1964) as "The most momentous event in the political industrial history of Australian labour, since the historic decision in favour of political action in 1890. No body," wrote Childe, "has exercised a more profound influence on the whole outlook of labour in Australia."

## Growing disillusion

Working class organisation in Australia had passed through three distinct stages of development. Prior to 1890 the most advanced workers held a strong belief in the power of industrial action, regarding "politics"

as something alien to the labor movement. After the defeat of the great strikes of 1891 and 1892, however, the need for a political party representing the interests of organized labor was recognised. The Australian Labor Party was born. But the record of the first Labor governments in office generated a growing disillusion with parliamentary methods and a renewal of faith in industrial action. The IWW, with its program of direct action, expressed this new tendency within the labor movement.

The IWW began in Australia as an association of militant workers organized in clubs in several industrial cities. These clubs were closely affiliated with the Socialist Labor Party, one of numerous small socialist sects operating in the major cities, each striving to win the workers to socialism by means of political propaganda.

From the outset, the issue of pure propaganda versus industrial action produced deep divisions within the socialist ranks. The IWW in America had split over the question, and after the American split of 1908 the industrial unionists of the SLP in Australia decided to branch out on their own. They set out to form not

merely clubs but branches of the One Big Industrial Union that was to be the weapon with which the workers would win the struggle to bring down the capitalist system.

The program of the IWW had been drawn up originally as the expression of the interests of the semi-skilled nomadic workers of the western states of America. In Australia, it attracted to its banner those unskilled workers who roved the bush and worked as shearers, cane-cutters, fruit-pickers, miners, and railway construction workers. These laborers lived generally a precarious, hand-to-mouth existence, having no possessions of their own and no ties with society. Their lives were accompanied by the ever-present threat of unemployment. They had no incentive for the acquisition of property or the establishment of family relationships. Their nomadic life engendered a spirit of self-reliance and rebelliousness, and an alienation from the bourgeois social order.

The workers were being deprived of the fruits of their labor every day of their lives. The exploiting class did not hesitate to use every means at its disposal to maintain its rule. It had proved, in practice, that it was

prepared to flout every moral and legal canon of bourgeois society to attain its ends. It had made free use of slander, defamation, the frame-up of militants, arson, violence, and murder in its attacks on labor. The American labor movement, in particular, had had its fill of such experiences.

The itinerant workers of the Australian countryside who joined the IWW acquired, in the course of their own experience, a militancy that placed them in the vanguard of the labor movement of their time. They saw themselves as opponents of the bourgeois system, of the rule of the landowners and the bosses. They saw through the fraud of bourgeois morality, which, to them, was only a cloak for the robbery of the workers by their masters. They saw no fundamental moral reason why they should not respond to the attacks of the master class by whatever means lay within their power. Sabotage of production by "go slow" methods and even the outright destruction of plant and produce were in no way excluded from their arsenal.

In practice, however, industrial sabotage meant strike action. The IWW was an organisation founded on a program of class struggle. It had little faith in isolated acts of destruction by individuals.

There is no credible evidence that the IWW at any stage ever set out on a

program of arson or direct interference with the means of production. The IWW recognised clearly that only the full, industrial might of organised labor in the centres of production could really compel the owners of industry to accede to the demands of the workers. Yet the formulation of its ideas and its emphasis on industrial sabotage left it a prey to an organised conspiracy by its opponents which resulted in the greatest frame-up in the

**“ . . . the record of the first Labor governments generated a growing disillusion with parliamentary methods and a general renewal of faith in industrial action. The IWW with its program of direct action, expressed this new tendency within the labor movement.”**

annals of Australian labor.

### World War

On August 1, 1914 the period of relatively peaceful expansion of Euro-

pean imperialism came to an abrupt end.

With the outbreak of world war, capitalism passed the zenith of its development and entered the period of its decay. The period of world revolution began. On the battlefields of Europe millions of workers were conscripted into hostile armies, and millions lost their lives.

Every capitalist power claimed that it was fighting a defensive war, that it was under attack by others, that the foundations of freedom and civilisation were threatened. The ruling classes were aided in their efforts to drag the world proletariat to the slaughter by the active collaboration of the leaders of the Socialist International, the representatives of organised labor, who abandoned the cause of revolutionary socialism and became the recruiting-sergeants for imperialism. It was the treachery of these bureaucrats that disarmed the working class at its time of greatest peril.

In Australia the ALP followed the capitulation of European Social Democracy and gave all-out support to British imperialism. Australian Labor prime minister Hughes stood at the head of the pro-imperialist forces.

It was in this situation that the IWW in Australia, alone amongst the forces of organised labor, opened up a revolutionary struggle against the war,

a struggle that was to become the central issue of Australian politics for years to come, and was to leave an indelible imprint on the history of Australian labor.

### Direct Action

From the very outset the IWW, in its newspaper *Direct Action*, challenged the war aims of British and Australian capitalism. It denounced the war as the struggle of rival imperialist powers fighting for possession of the world's markets. It declared that workers had nothing to gain and everything to lose from the war. It called on workers to refuse to fight.

When Federal Labor leader Fisher appealed to nationalist sentiments to win votes in the election of 1914 *Direct Action* responded in the following terms:

**“ . . . the IWW in Australia, alone among the forces of organised labor, opened up a revolutionary struggle against the war, a struggle that was to become the central issue of Australian politics for years to come . . . ”**

“When George the Least, by the Grace of God and ignorance of the working-classes Emperor of the Britains and a million pound shareholder in the American Steel Trust, wants a great European war to create a vast demand for steel, Mr. Fisher and his gang and all their toadies rise to the occasion, and are prepared to give our last man and our last shilling to see Georgie and his cobbers through the business deal.”

Such bold attacks on the credentials of the representatives of the country's rulers did not pass unnoticed: In 1915 Tom Barker, editor of *Direct Action*, was arrested and charged with sedition.

Despite the seriousness of the charge he was released after a short interval, only to be re-arrested. In all, he was

gaoled three times, and during his third imprisonment prominent leaders were alleged to have threatened to burn down certain buildings in Sydney in order to force his release. An elaborate series of charges of attempted arson was constructed, together with charges of the utterance of forged five pound notes, and the murder of a policeman.

The case has been analysed exhaustively in the book *Sydney's Burning* by historian Ian Turner. Although Turner expresses doubts about the innocence of some of the twelve IWW members charged, he produces overwhelming evidence that the whole case was a frame-up from start to finish and that it was initiated in response to the anti-war stand of *Direct Action*. Turner's review of the evidence can leave the reader with only one conclusion: the frame-up of the IWW twelve was organised in order to destroy their influence within the working class and to break the back of the anti-war movement.

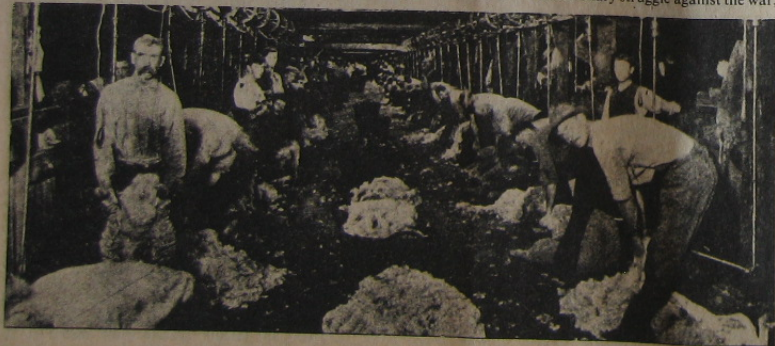
The story of the campaign for the release of the twelve is long and complex, but whatever conclusions may have been drawn by bourgeois academics and lawyers, the verdict of the labor movement is clear. When ten of the IWW leaders were finally released after four years imprisonment, their appearance at a victory celebration at the Sydney Town Hall on August 6, 1920 was greeted by tumultuous applause. The crowd, flowing out into the street, rose in solidarity with the ten on the platform and sang "The Red Flag."

The struggle of the IWW against the imperialist war marks the zenith of achievement of revolutionary industrial trade unionism in Australia. This was, indeed, their finest hour. These were the people who struck real terror in the hearts of the Australian ruling class.

### Achievements

Vere Gordon Childe sums up the achievements of the IWW in the following words:

“The I.W.W. . . can claim the credit for the defeat of conscription, and its anti-war propaganda prepared the way for the A.L.P. peace proposals of



Shearing shed (1905). Roving bush workers were attracted to militancy of IWW.

Pay No Rent, No Dabbed Give the Employer a Chance To Show His Poisonous

## DIRECT ACTION

WAR! WHAT FOR?



Direct Action greets the war.

between "bourgeois program" and "reformist ideology"? Must reformist parties be forbidden as well? Will the Social Democracy be suppressed?

It is unavoidable that on the basis of historical traditions, such reformist influence will continue to survive in the working class of many countries for a long period. That survival will not be shortened by administrative repression; on the contrary, such repression would tend to strengthen it. The best way to fight against reformist illusions and ideas is through the combination of ideological struggle and the creation of the material conditions for the disappearance of such illusions. Such a struggle would lose much of its efficacy under conditions of administrative repression and lack of free debate and exchange of ideas.

If the revolutionary party agitates for the suppression of Social Democratic or other reformist formations, it will be a thousand times more difficult to maintain freedom of tendencies and toleration of factions within its own ranks, for the political heterogeneity of the working class would then inevitably tend to reflect itself within the single party.

Thus, the real alternative is not: either freedom for those with a genuine socialist program or freedom for all political parties. The real choice is: either workers democracy with the right of the masses to elect whomever they want, and freedom of political organization for those elected (including people with bourgeois or petty

bourgeois ideologies or programs), or a decisive restriction of the political rights of the working class itself, with all the consequences which flow therefrom. Systematic restriction of political parties leads to systematic restriction of workers democracy and unavoidably tends toward systematic restriction of freedom within the revolutionary vanguard party itself.

### 3. What do political parties represent?

Revolutionary Marxists reject all spontaneist illusions according to which the proletariat is capable of solving the tactical and strategic problems posed by the need to overthrow capitalism and the bourgeois state and to conquer state power and build socialism by spontaneous mass actions without a conscious vanguard party based upon a revolutionary program tested by history, with cadres educated on the basis of that program and tested through long experience in the living class struggle.

The argument of anarchist origin, also taken up by ultraleftist "councilist" currents, according to which political parties are by their very nature "liberal-bourgeois" formations alien to the proletariat and have no place in workers councils because they tend to usurp political power from the working class, is theoretically incorrect and politically harmful and dangerous. It is not true that political groupings, tendencies, and parties come into existence only with the rise

of the modern bourgeoisie. In the fundamental (not the formal) sense of the word they are much older. They came into being with the emergence of forms of government in which relatively large numbers of people (as opposed to small village community or tribal assemblies) participated in the exercise of political power to some extent (eg, under the democracies of Antiquity).

Political parties in that real (and not formal) sense of the word are a historical phenomenon the contents of which have obviously changed in different epochs, as occurred in the great bourgeois-democratic revolutions of the past (especially, but not only, in the great French revolution). The proletarian revolution will have a similar effect. It can be predicted confidently that under genuine workers democracy parties will receive a much richer and much broader content and will conduct mass ideological struggles of a much broader scope and with much greater mass participation than anything that has occurred up to now under the most advanced forms of bourgeois democracy.

In fact, as soon as political decisions go beyond a small number of routine questions that can be taken up and solved by a restricted group of people, any form of democracy implies the need for structured and coherent opinions on a great number of related questions, in other words a choice between alternative political lines and programs. That's what parties represent.

**"Far from reducing the costs of 'social transformation' or from ensuring a peaceful, albeit slower, transition to socialism, this policy . . . can only lead to bloody defeats and mass slaughters of the German, Spanish, and Chilean type."**

The absence of such structured alternatives, far from giving large numbers of people greater freedom of expression and choice, makes government by assemblies and workers councils impossible. Ten thousand people cannot vote on 500 alternatives. If power is not to be transferred to demagogues or secret pressure groups and cliques, there is need for free confrontation among a limited number of structured and coherent opinions, ie, political programs and parties, without monopolies or prohibitions. This is what will make workers democracy meaningful and operative.

Furthermore, the anarchist and "councilist"

opposition to the formation of political parties under the dictatorship of the proletariat in the process of building socialism either: 1) represents wishful thinking (ie, the desire that the mass of the toilers will abstain from forming or supporting groups, tendencies, and parties with different political lines and programs), in which case it is simply utopian, for that will not happen; or 2) it represents an attempt to prevent and suppress the attempts by all those toilers who wish to engage in political action on a pluralistic basis to do so, and in that case it can objectively favor only a process of bureaucratic monopolization of power, ie, the very opposite of what the libertarians want.

In many centrist and ultraleftist groupings a similar argument is advanced, according to which the dispossession of the Soviet proletariat from the direct exercise of political power was rooted in the Leninist concept of democratic centralist organization itself. They hold that the Bolsheviks' efforts to build a party to lead the working class in a revolution inevitably led to a paternalistic, manipulative, bureaucratic relationship between the party and the toiling masses, which led in turn to a party monopoly on the exercise of power after the victorious socialist revolution.

This argument is unhistorical and based on an idealist concept of history. From a Marxist, ie, historical materialist point of view, the basic causes of the political expropriation of the Soviet proletariat were material and socioeconomic, not ideological or programmatic. The general poverty and backwardness of Russia and the relative numerical and cultural weakness of the proletariat made the long-term exercise of power by the proletariat impossible if the Russian revolution remained isolated; that was the consensus not only among the Bolsheviks in 1917-18, but among all tendencies claiming to be Marxist. The catastrophic decline of the productive forces in Russia as a result of the first world war, the civil war, foreign imperialist military intervention, sabotage by probourgeois technicians, etc led to conditions of scarcity that fostered a growth of special privileges. The same factors led to a qualitative weakening of the already small proletariat. In addition, large portions of the political vanguard of the class, those best qualified to exercise power, died in the civil war or left the factories to be incorporated massively into the Red Army and the state apparatus.

After the beginning of the New Economic Policy a certain economic upturn began, but massive unemployment and continuous disappointment caused by the retreats and defeats of the world revolution nurtured political passivity and a general decline of mass political activity,



The "peaceful road" to socialism leads only to bloody defeats and slaughters. Here, captured republican troops in fascist camp near French border during Spanish civil war of 1936.

extending to the soviets. The working class was thus unable to stem the growth of a materially privileged layer, which, in order to maintain its rule, increasingly restricted democratic rights and destroyed the soviets and the Bolshevik Party itself (while using its name for its own purposes). These are the main causes of the usurpation by a bureaucracy of the exercise of direct power and for the gradual merger of the party apparatus, the state apparatus, and the apparatus of economic managers into a privileged bureaucratic caste.

Marxist historians can argue whether some of the concrete measures taken by the Bolsheviks even before Lenin's death may have objectively favored the process of Stalinisation, or if Lenin and Trotsky were late in understanding the scope of the danger of bureaucratisation and the degree to which the party apparatus had already been absorbed by the bureaucratisation process. But these could be said to be contributing factors at most. The main causes of all these processes were objective, material, economic, and social. They must be sought in the social infrastructure of Soviet society, not in its political superstructure and certainly not in a particular concept of the party.

On the other hand, historical experience has confirmed that where a leading or even highly influential revolutionary party is absent, workers councils last shorter and not longer than they did in Russia: Germany in 1918 and Spain in 1936-37 are the most conspicuous examples. Furthermore, without such a party these councils do not succeed in conquering state power, i.e. in overthrowing the bourgeois state. Empirical evidence confirms Marxist theory, showing that it is the free and democratic self-organisation of the toiling masses, dialectically combined with the political clarification made possible by a revolutionary vanguard party in the leadership, that represents the best chance for the conquest and continuous exercise of power by the working class itself.

#### 4. Workers councils and the extension of democratic rights

Without full freedom to organise political groups, tendencies, and parties no full flowering of democratic rights and freedoms for the toiling masses is possible under the dictatorship of the proletariat. Marx and Lenin's whole critique of the limitations of bourgeois democracy is based on the fact that private property and capitalist exploitation (i.e. social and economic inequality), coupled with the specific class structure of bourgeois society (atomisation and alienation of the working class, legislation defending private property, function of the repressive apparatus,

etc.), result in the violent restriction of the practical application of democratic rights and the practical enjoyment of democratic freedoms by the big majority of the toiling masses, even in the most democratic bourgeois regimes. The logical conclusion flowing from this critique is that workers democracy must be superior to bourgeois democracy not only in the economic and social sphere—not only in the right to work, to security of existence, to free education, to leisure time, etc. which are obviously very important—but also in the scope and extent of the enjoyment of democratic rights by the workers and all layers of toilers in the political and social sphere. To grant a single party, so-called mass organisations, or "professional associations" (like writers associations) controlled exclusively by that party a monopoly on access to printing presses, radio, television, and other mass media, to assembly halls, etc. would, in fact, restrict and not extend the democratic rights of the proletariat compared to those enjoyed under bourgeois democracy. The right of the toiling people, including those with dissenting views, to have access to material means of exercising democratic freedoms (freedom of the press, of assembly, of demonstration, the right to strike, etc) is essential.

**"Under the dictatorship of the proletariat state power is exercised by democratically elected workers councils. The revolutionary party struggles for a correct line and for political leadership within these workers councils without substituting itself for them."**

Therefore, an extension of democratic rights for the toilers beyond those already enjoyed under conditions of bourgeois democracy is incompatible with the restriction of the right to form political groupings, tendencies, or parties on programmatic or ideological grounds.

Moreover, self-activity and self-administration by the toiling masses under the dictatorship of the proletariat and in the building of a socialist society will take on many new facets and extend the concepts of "political activity," "political parties," "political programs," and "democratic rights" far beyond anything characteristic of political life under bourgeois democracy. Through media such as television and time-sharing (i.e. telephone access to



Paris, May 17, 1968. Some of the forty thousand workers who struck and seized the huge Renault car factory listen to union speakers inside the plant.

computers, contemporary technology makes possible a tremendous leap forward in the interaction between direct and indirect (representative) democracy. Workers in a factory or toilers in a neighborhood can follow "live" speeches by their delegates in local, regional, national, or international congresses and can intervene rapidly to correct false representations of facts or violations of mandates, once a general atmosphere of free political criticism and debate prevails. Millions of toilers can have direct access to an immense mass of information, once capitalist "secrecy" and monopoly on information centralised by computer systems is forbidden or broken. Political instruments like referendums on specific questions could be used to enable the mass of the toilers to decide directly on a whole series of key questions of policy.

Likewise, instruments of direct democracy could be used on a wide scale in the field of planning, to ascertain real consumer wishes not through indirect means (market mechanisms) but through consumer-producers conferences

and consumer mass meetings or referendums on the choice of specific models, varieties, and quality grades of consumer goods. Here again, contemporary techniques make all these mechanisms much more realistic and much more applicable to millions of people than was objectively possible in the past.

The building of a classless socialist society is also a gigantic process of remolding all aspects of social life. It involves constant revolutionary change not only in the relations of production, the mode of distribution, the work process, the forms of administration of the economy and society, the customs, habits and ways of thinking of the great majority of people, but also fundamental reconstruction of all living conditions: reconstruction of cities, reunification of manual and intellectual labor, complete revolution of the education system, restoration and defence of the ecological equilibrium, technological revolutions designed to conserve scarce natural resources, etc.

All these endeavors, for which humanity possesses no blue-prints, will give rise to





Workers demonstrate against layoffs outside Fiat plant in Turin, Italy. Uncompromising defence of workers democracy is key to winning workers to socialism.

momentous ideological and political debates and struggles. Different political programs arising around these combined issues will play a much greater role than nostalgic references to the bourgeois past or abstract affirmations of the communist ideal. But any restriction of these debates, struggles, and formation of parties under the pretext that this or that platform "objectively" reflects bourgeois or petty-bourgeois pressure and interests and "if logically carried to the end" would lead to the "restoration of capitalism" can only hinder the emergence of majority consensus around the most effective and correct solutions of these burning problems and correct solutions of these burning problems, *from the point of view of building socialism*, i.e. in the class interests of the proletariat itself.

More specifically, it should be pointed out that momentous struggles will continue throughout the process of building a classless society, struggles that concern social evils that are rooted in class society but will not disappear immediately with the elimination of capitalist exploitation or wage-labor. The oppression of women, the oppression of national minorities, and the oppression and alienation of youth are archetypes of such problems, which cannot automatically be subsumed under the general heading "class struggle of the working class against the bourgeoisie" except by divorcing the categories "working class" and "bourgeoisie"

from their classical Marxist, materialist definitions and foundations, as is done by the Maoists and various ultraleftist currents.

Political freedom under workers democracy therefore implies freedom of organisation and action for independent women's liberation, national liberation, and youth movements, i.e. movements much broader than the working class in the scientific sense of the word, not to speak of the revolutionary Marxist current within the working class. Revolutionary Marxists will be able to win political leadership within these autonomous movements and to ideologically defeat various utopian or reactionary ideological currents not through administrative or repressive measures but on the contrary by promoting the broadest possible mass democracy within their ranks and by uncompromisingly upholding the right of all tendencies to defend their opinions and platforms before society as a whole.

It should likewise be recognised that the specific form of workers state power implies a unique dialectical combination of centralisation and decentralisation. The withering away of the state, to be initiated from the inception of the dictatorship of the proletariat, expresses itself through a process of gradual evolution of the right of administration in broad sectors of social activity (health system, education system, postal-railway-telecommunications systems, etc), internationally, nationally, regionally, and locally, once the central congress of workers councils (i.e. the *proletariat as a class*) has by majority vote allocated to each of these sectors that part of human and material resources at the disposal of society as a whole. This again implies specific forms and contents of political debates and struggles which cannot be predicted in advance or in any way reduced to simplistic and mechanical "class criteria."

Finally, in the building of classless society, the participation of millions of people not only in a more or less passive way through their votes, but also in the actual administration at various levels cannot be reduced to a workerist concept of considering only workers "at the point of production." Lenin said that in a workers state the vast majority of the population would participate directly in the administration of "state functions." This means that the soviets on which the dictatorship of the proletariat will be based are not factory councils, but bodies of self-organisation of the masses in all areas of economic and social life, including factories, commercial units, hospitals, schools, transport and telecommunications centres, and neighborhoods. This is indispensable in order to integrate into the proletariat its most dispersed and often poorest and most oppressed layers,

such as women, oppressed nationalities, youth, workers in small shops, old-age pensioners, etc. It is also indispensable for cementing the alliance between the working class and the lower petty bourgeoisie, which is important in reducing the social costs both of a victorious revolution and of the building of socialism.

## 5. A clear stand is necessary to win the masses for the socialist revolution.

The defence of a clear and unequivocal program of workers democracy is today an indispensable part of the struggle against the reformist leaderships that seek to inculcate bourgeois-democratic myths and illusions in the working class in the imperialist countries. It is likewise indispensable in the struggle against procapitalist illusions and anti-soviet prejudices among various layers of rebels and oppositionists in the bureaucratised workers states in the process of the unfolding struggle for political revolution in these countries.

### "The ruling class . . . [identifies] parliamentary institutions with . . . democratic rights."

The historical experience of both fascism and other types of reactionary bourgeois dictatorships in the West and the Stalin and Mao regimes and their successors in the East have aroused in the proletariat of both the imperialist countries and the bureaucratised workers states a deep distrust of any form of one-party system and of any justification, however sophisticated, for restricting democratic rights after the overthrow of capitalism. This distrust objectively conforms to the basic course of all proletarian revolutions up to now; the direction has always been toward the broadest possible democratic rights and self-activity of the masses. This has been the case from the Paris Commune to the Russian and German revolutions to the experiences of the Spanish revolution of 1936-37 to the more recent working-class upsurges in France in 1968, Italy in 1969-70, and Portugal in 1974-75; it has likewise been expressed in the antibureaucratic upsurges in East Germany, Hungary, Poland, and Czechoslovakia since the 1950s.

The ruling class utilises all the ideological means at its disposal to identify parliamentary institutions with the maintenance of democratic rights. In both Western Europe and North America, for instance, the capitalist rulers seek to appear as champions of the democratic

outlook of the working class and plebian masses, an outlook which has been powerfully strengthened by the negative experiences of fascism and Stalinism.

One of the key components of the struggle for leadership of the masses consists of properly understanding the import of their democratic demands and actions, of expressing them adequately, and thus counteracting the strenuous efforts of the reformists to co-opt the struggle for democratic demands and turn it into the blind alley of bourgeois parliamentary institutions.

The task of wresting leadership from the reformists as representatives of the democratic aspirations of the masses is thus crucial for revolutionary Marxists. Obviously, programmatic clarification and propaganda—important as they are—are insufficient to achieve this objective. The masses learn through their practical daily experience; hence the importance of going through this daily experience with them and drawing the correct lessons from it.

As the class struggle sharpens, the reformist leaders, who trumpet the alleged benefits of the bourgeois parliamentary system, will sound less and less convincing, and the workers will increasingly challenge the authority and prerogatives of the ruling class on all levels. The workers themselves, through their own organisations—from workers committees in the factories to workers councils (soviets)—will begin to assert more and more economic and political decision-making authority, and they will gain confidence in their power to overthrow the bourgeois state. In this same process, in order to carry out their struggle most effectively, with the broadest mass involvement, the workers will see the need for the most democratic forms of organisation. Through this experience of struggle and participation in their own democratically run organisations, the masses will experience more freedom of action and more liberty in the broadest sense of the word than they ever exercised under bourgeois parliamentary democracy, and they will learn the irreplaceable value of proletarian democracy. This is an indispensable link in the chain of events leading from capitalist rule to the conquest of power by the proletariat and will be a vital experience to draw upon in establishing the democratic norms of the workers state.

If the revolutionary Marxists leave the slightest impression, either through their propaganda or through their practice, that under the dictatorship of the proletariat the political freedoms of the workers will be narrower than under bourgeois democracy—including the freedom to criticise the government, to have opposition parties and an opposition press—

then the struggle to overcome the panderers of parliamentary illusions will be incommensurably more difficult, if not condemned to defeat. Any hesitation or equivocation in this field by the revolutionary vanguard will only help the reformist lackeys of the liberal bourgeoisie divide the proletariat and divert an important sector of the class into defence of bourgeois state institutions, under the guise of assuring democratic rights.

It has been argued that all the above arguments apply only to those countries in which the wage-earning class already represents a clear majority of the active population, ie, where they are not faced with a great majority of petty independent producers. It is true that in some semicolonial countries the weakness of the old ruling class led to a very favorable relationship of social forces in which the overthrow of capitalism was accomplished without the flowering of workers democracy (China and Vietnam being two outstanding examples). But it is necessary to underline the exceptional character of these experiences, which will not be repeated in most semicolonial countries and cannot be repeated in imperialist countries. It is necessary, furthermore, to stress that insofar as the overturn of capitalism in several backward countries was not tied to the emergence of direct workers power through democratically elected councils of workers and poor peasants, these workers states were condemned to be bureaucratized from the start. As a result, severe obstructions have been erected to progress on the road toward the building of a socialist classless society, both at home and internationally.

**"In no way does the Marxist theory of the state entail the concept that a one-party system is a necessary precondition or feature of workers power . . ."**

Likewise, inasmuch as a growing number of semicolonial countries are at present undergoing processes of partial industrialisation, their proletariat today is often already of much greater weight relative to the active population than was the Russian proletariat in 1917 or the Chinese proletariat in 1949. This proletariat, through its own experience of struggle, will speedily rise toward levels of consciousness and self-organisation that will place the organisation of soviet-type state organs of the agenda. In that sense, the Fourth International's program of workers council democracy as a basis for the

dictatorship of the proletariat is a *universal program for world revolution*, which corresponds fundamentally to the social nature, historical needs, and way of thinking of the working class itself. It is in no way a "luxury" reserved for the workers of the "richest countries."

## 6. In response to the Stalinists

Among those who claim to stand for the dictatorship of the proletariat, it is only the Stalinists who advance a theoretically and politically consistent alternative to our program of socialist democracy based on workers councils and a multiparty system within which the revolutionary vanguard party fights for political leadership by winning the majority of the toilers to its views. The Stalinist alternative is based on the exercise of state power under the "dictatorship of the proletariat" by a *single party in the name of the working class*. This alternative is based upon the following (not often clearly stated) assumptions:

a. That the "leading party" or even its "leading nucleus" has a monopoly on scientific knowledge and is guaranteed infallibility (which implies the theological and scholastic conclusion that one cannot give the same rights to those who defend truth and those who propagate falsehoods).

b. That the working class, and even more the toiling masses in general, are too backward politically, too much under the influence of bourgeois and petty-bourgeois ideology, too much inclined to prefer immediate material advantages as against historical social interests, for any direct exercise of state power by democratically elected workers councils; genuine workers democracy would entail the risk of an increasing series of harmful, objectively counterrevolutionary decisions which would open the road to the restoration of capitalism, or at the very least gravely damage and retard the process of building socialism.

c. That therefore the dictatorship of the proletariat can be exercised only by the "leading party" for the proletariat, ie, that the dictatorship of the proletariat is the dictatorship of the party (either representing an essentially passive working class, or actively basing itself on the class struggle of the masses, who are nevertheless considered unworthy of directly exercising state power themselves).

d. That since the party, and that party alone, represents the interests of the working class, which are considered homogeneous in all situations and on all issues, the "leading party" itself must be monolithic. Any opposition tendency necessarily reflects alien class pressure and alien class interests in one form or another.

(The struggle between two lines is the struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie inside the party, the Maoists conclude.) Monolithic control of all spheres of social life by the single party is the logical outcome of these concepts. Direct party control must be established over all sectors of "civil society."

e. A further underlying assumption is that of an intensification of the class struggle in the period of building socialism (although this assumption alone does not necessarily lead to the same conclusions if it is not combined with the previous ones). From that assumption is deduced the increasing danger of restoration of bourgeois power even long after private property in the means of production has been abolished, and irrespective of the level of development of the productive forces. The threat of bourgeois restoration is portrayed as the mechanical outcome of the victory of bourgeois ideology in this or that social, political, cultural, or even scientific field. In view of the extreme power thereby attributed to bourgeois ideas, the use of repression against those who are said to objectively represent these ideas becomes a corollary of the argument.

All these assumptions are unscientific from a general theoretical point of view and are untenable in the light of the real historical experience of the class struggle during and after the overthrow of capitalist rule in the USSR and other countries. Again and again they have shown themselves to be harmful to the defence of the proletariat's class interests and an obstacle to a successful struggle against the remnants of the bourgeoisie and of bourgeois ideology. But inasmuch as they had become nearly universally accepted dogmas by the CPs in Stalin's time and undoubtedly have an inner consistency—a reflection of the material interests of the bureaucracy as a social layer—they have never been explicitly and thoroughly criticised and rejected by any CP since then. These concepts

**" . . . the establishment of monolithic one-party rule in a workers state does not strengthen its capacity for self-defence against imperialist aggression. The very opposite is true."**

continue to linger on, at least partially, in the ideology of many leaders and cadres of the CPs and SPs, ie, of the bureaucracies of the labor movement. They continue to constitute a conceptual source for justifying various forms of

curtailing the democratic rights of the toiling masses in the bureaucratized workers states, as well as in those sectors of the labor movement in the capitalist countries which are dominated by the CPs. A clear and coherent refutation of these concepts is indispensable in defending our program of socialist democracy.

**"This is our programmatic and principled norm—unfettered political freedom for all those individuals, groups, tendencies, and parties who in practice respect collective property and the workers' constitution."**

First: the idea of a homogeneous working class exclusively represented by a single party is contradicted by all historical experience and by any Marxist, materialist analysis of the concrete growth and development of the contemporary proletariat, both under capitalism and after the overthrow of capitalism. At most, one could defend the thesis that the revolutionary vanguard party alone *programmatically* defends

## Pathfinder Bookshops

Melbourne  
82 Smith St., Collingwood

Sydney  
2nd floor/215A Thomas St, Haymarket

Pathfinder Bookshops stock a wide range of radical and socialist books and pamphlets: works by Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Trotsky; books on women's liberation and feminism; Australian history and politics; all publications of the SWP; etc.

Drop in and browse around. Open from 10 am to 5 pm Monday to Friday.



Maolist cadre exhorts printing workers to denounce Liu Shao-ch'i during Chinese "cultural revolution." Stalinist regimes stand opposed to genuine workers democracy with full flowering of tendencies, different schools of thought.

the longterm historical interests of the proletariat. But even in that case, a dialectical-materialist approach, as opposed to a mechanical-idealist one, would immediately add that only insofar as that party actually conquers political leadership over the majority of the workers can one speak of an integration of immediate and long-term class interests having been achieved in practice, with the possibilities for error much reduced.

**"Without full freedom to organise political groups, tendencies, and parties no full flowering of democratic rights and freedoms of the toiling masses is possible under the dictatorship of the proletariat."**

In fact, there is a definite, objectively determined stratification of the working class and of the development of working-class consciousness. There is likewise at the very least a tension between the struggle for immediate interests and the historical goals of the labor movement (for

example, the contradiction between immediate consumption and long-term investment). Precisely these contradictions, rooted in the legacy of uneven development of bourgeois society, are among the main theoretical justifications for the need for a revolutionary vanguard, as opposed to a simple "all inclusive" union of all wage-earners in a single party. But this again implies that one cannot deny that different parties, with different orientations and different ways of approaching the class struggle between capital and labor and the relations between immediate demands and historical goals, can arise and have arisen within the working class and do genuinely represent sectors of the working class (be it purely sectoral interests, ideological pressures of alien class forces, etc).

Second: a revolutionary party with a democratic internal life does have a tremendous advantage in the field of correct analysis of socioeconomic and political developments and of correct elaboration of tactical and strategic answers to such developments, for it can base itself on the body of scientific socialism, Marxism, which synthesizes and generalizes all past experiences of the class struggle as a whole.

This programmatic framework (or its current political elaboration makes it much less likely

than any other tendency of the labor movement, or any unorganised sector of the working class, to reach wrong conclusions, premature generalisations, and one-sided and impressionistic reactions to unforeseen developments, to make concessions to ideological and political pressures of alien class forces, to engage in unprincipled political compromises, etc. These undeniable facts, confirmed again and again by every turn of events in the more than three-quarters of a century since Bolshevism was founded, are the most powerful arguments in favor of the revolutionary vanguard party.

But they do not guarantee that errors by that party will automatically be avoided. There are no infallible parties. There are no infallible party leaderships, party majorities, "Leninist central committees," or individual party leaders. The Marxist program is never a definitively achieved one. No new situation can be comprehensively analysed in reference to historical precedents.



Italian Communist Party head Enrico Berlinguer. Eurocommunists avoid calling for revolutionary change in bureaucratised workers states.

Social reality is constantly undergoing changes. New and unforeseen developments regularly occur at historical turning points: the phenomenon of imperialism after Engels's death was not analysed by Marx and Engels; the delay of the proletarian revolution in the advanced imperialist countries was not foreseen by the Bolsheviks; the bureaucratic degeneration of the first workers state was not incorporated in Lenin's theory of the dictatorship of the proletariat; the emergence after World War II of many workers states (albeit with bureaucratic deformations) following revolutionary mass struggles not led by revolutionary Marxist leaderships (Yugoslavia, China, Cuba, Vietnam) was not foreseen by Trotsky; etc. No complete, ready-made answers for new phenomena can be found in the works of the classics or in the existing program.

Furthermore, new problems will arise in the course of the building of socialism, problems for which the revolutionary Marxist program provides only a general framework of reference but no automatic source of correct answers. The struggle for correct answers to such new problems implies a constant interaction between theoretical-political analysis and discussions and revolutionary class practice, the final word being spoken by practical experience.

**"The so-called Eurocommunist current, while accentuating its dogmas and practices of the Soviet and East European bureaucracies . . . proposes at the most a reform of the worst excesses of Stalinist rule rather than a revolutionary change."**

Under such circumstances, any restriction of free political and theoretical debate spilling over to a restriction of free political mass activity of the proletariat, i.e. any restriction of socialist democracy, will constitute an obstacle to the revolutionary party itself arriving at correct policies. It is therefore not only theoretically wrong but practically ineffective and harmful from the point of view of successfully advancing on the road of building socialism.

One of the gravest consequences of a monolithic one-party system, of the absence of a plurality of political groups, tendencies, and parties, and of administrative restrictions being imposed on free political and ideological debate, is the impediments such a system erects on the



Soviet reform baptists hold illegal service in Ukraine. Religious freedom would be guaranteed under socialist democracy. Religion would decline as material conditions changed.

road to rapidly correcting mistakes committed by the government of a workers state. Mistakes committed by such a government, like mistakes committed by the majority of the working class, its various layers, and different political groupings, are by and large unavoidable in the process of building a classless, socialist society. A rapid correction of these mistakes, however, is possible in a climate of free political debate, free access of opposition groupings to mass media, large-scale political awareness and involvement in political life by the masses, and control by the masses over government and state activity at all levels.

The absence of all these correctives under a system of monolithic one-party government makes the rectification of grave mistakes all the more difficult. The very dogma of party infallibility on which the Stalinist system rests puts a heavy premium both on the denial of mistakes in party policies (search for self-justification and for scapegoats) and on the attempt to postpone even implicit corrections as long as possible. The objective costs of such a system in terms of economic losses, of unnecessary, ie, objectively avoidable, sacrifices imposed upon the toiling masses, of political defeats in relation to class enemies, and of political disorientation and demoralisation of the proletariat, are indeed staggering, as is shown by the history of the Soviet Union since 1928. To give just one example: the obstinate clinging to an erroneous agricultural policy by Stalin and his henchmen has wreaked havoc with the food supply of the Soviet people for more than a

generation; its negative consequences have not been eliminated to this day, nearly fifty years later. Such a catastrophe would have been impossible had there been free political debate over opposing policies in the USSR.

Third: the idea that *restricting* the democratic rights of the proletariat in any way conducive to the gradual "education" of an allegedly "backward" mass of toilers is blatantly absurd. One cannot learn to swim except by going into the water. There is no way masses can learn to raise the level of their political awareness other than by engaging in political activity and learning from the experience of such activity. There is no way they can learn from mistakes other than by having the right to commit them. Paternalistic prejudices about the alleged "backwardness" of the masses generally hide a conservative petty-bourgeois fear of mass activity, which has nothing in common with revolutionary Marxism. Any restriction of political mass activity under the pretext that the masses would make too many mistakes can only lead to increasing political apathy among the workers, ie, to paradoxically reinforcing the very situation which is said to be the problem.

---

**. . . historical experience confirms the total ineffectiveness of administrative struggles against reactionary bourgeois and petty bourgeois ideologies; in fact in the long run such methods even strengthen the hold of these ideologies . . .**

---

Fourth: under conditions of full-scale socialisation of the means of production and the social surplus product, any long-term monopoly of the exercise of political power in the hands of a minority even if it is a revolutionary party beginning with revolutionary proletarian motivations runs a strong risk of stimulating objective tendencies toward bureaucratization. Under such socioeconomic conditions, whoever controls the state administration thereby controls the social surplus product and its distribution. Given the fact that economic inequalities will still exist at the outset, particularly in the economically backward workers states, this can become a source of corruption and of the growth of material privileges and social differentiation. Thus, there is an objective need for real control over decision-making to rest in the hands of the proletariat as a class, with unlimited possibilities

to denounce pilferage, waste, and illegal appropriation and misuse of resources at all levels, including the highest ones. No such democratic mass control is possible without opposition tendencies, groups, and parties having full freedom of action, propaganda, and agitation, as well as full access to the mass media.

Likewise, during the transition period between capitalism and socialism, and even in the first phase of communism (socialism) it is unavoidable that forms of division of labor (especially separation between intellectual and manual labor) will survive, as well as forms of labor organization and labor processes totally or partially inherited from capitalism that do not enable a full development of all the creative talents of the producer. These cannot be neutralised by education, indoctrination, moral exhortation or periodic "mass criticism campaigns," as the Maoists contend, and still less by mystifying expedients like cadres working one day a week as manual laborers. These objective obstacles on the road to the *gradual emergence of truly socialist relations of production* can be prevented from becoming powerful sources of material privileges only if a strict distinction is made between the functional and the social division of labor, ie, *if the mass of the producers* (in the first place those likely to be the most exploited, the manual workers) *are placed in conditions such that they can exercise real political and social power over any "functionally" privileged layer.* The radical reduction of the work day and the fullest soviet democracy are the two key conditions for attaining this goal.

---

**"If the revolutionary Marxists leave the slightest impression . . . that under the dictatorship of the proletariat the political freedoms of the workers will be narrower than under bourgeois democracy . . . then the struggle . . . will be incommensurably more difficult, if not condemned to defeat."**

---

The present conditions, which make the problem of upholding and advancing proletarian democracy especially difficult, would of course be altered qualitatively if (or when) either of the two following developments occur: 1. A socialist revolution in one or more industrially advanced capitalist countries. Such a revolution would itself give enormous impul-



Union meeting in Minneapolis, 1934. A key to winning workers to socialism is propaganda linking socialism with extension of democratic freedoms.

sion to the struggle for democratic rights throughout the world and would immediately open the possibility of increasing productivity on an immense scale, eliminating the scarcities that are the root cause of the entrenchment of parasitic bureaucratism, as explained above. 2. A political revolution in the bureaucratically deformed or degenerated workers states, particularly the Soviet Union or the People's Republic of China. This would likewise signify an upsurge of proletarian democracy with colossal repercussions internationally, besides putting an end to the bureaucratic caste and its concept of building "socialism in one country."

Following a political revolution, common economic planning among all the workers states would become realisable, thus assuring a leap forward in productivity that would help remove the economic basis of parasitic bureaucratism.

Finally, it is true that there is no automatic correlation or simultaneity between the abolition of capitalist state power and private property in the means of production and the disappearance of privileges in the field of personal wealth, cultural heritage, and ideological influence, not to speak of the disappearance of all elements of commodity production. Long after bourgeois state power has been overthrown and capitalist property abolished, remnants of petty commodity production and the survival of elements of a money economy will continue to create a framework in which primitive accumulation of

capital can still reappear, especially if the level of development of the productive forces is still insufficient to guarantee the automatic appearance and consolidation of genuinely socialist relations of production. Likewise, long after the bourgeoisie has lost its positions as a ruling class politically and economically, the influence of bourgeois and petty-bourgeois ideologies, customs, habits, cultural values, etc will linger on in relatively large spheres of social life and broad layers of society.

But it is completely wrong to draw from this undeniable fact (which is, incidentally, one of the main reasons why *state power* of the working class is indispensable in order to prevent these "islands of bourgeois influence" from becoming bases for the restoration of capitalism) the conclusion that administrative repression of bourgeois ideology is a necessary condition for the building of a socialist society. On the contrary, historical experience confirms the *total ineffectiveness* of administrative struggles against reactionary bourgeois and petty-bourgeois ideologies; in fact, in the long run such methods even strengthen the hold of these ideologies and place the great mass of the proletariat in the position of being ideologically disarmed before them, because of lack of experience with genuine political and ideological debate and the lack of credibility of official "state doctrines."

The only effective way to eliminate the influence of these ideologies upon the mass of the toilers lies in:

a. The creation of objective conditions under which these ideologies lose the material roots of their reproduction.

b. The waging of a relentless struggle against these ideologies in the field of ideology itself, which can, however, attain its full success only under conditions of open debate and open confrontation, ie, of freedom for the defenders of reactionary ideologies to defend their ideas, of ideological cultural pluralism.

“ . . . the Fourth International's program of workers council democracy as a basis for the dictatorship of the proletariat is a universal program for world revolution . . . It is in no way a 'luxury' reserved for the workers of the 'richest countries.' ”

Only those who have neither confidence in the superiority of Marxist and materialist ideas nor confidence in the proletariat and the toiling masses can shrink from open ideological confrontation with bourgeois and petty-bourgeois ideologies under the dictatorship of the proletariat. Once that class is disarmed and expropriated, once their members can have access to the mass media only in relation to their



Celebration of ninth anniversary of Cuban revolution, Havana. Workers democracy is program for world revolution, for poor countries as well as industrially-developed countries.

## Socialist books from Pathfinder Press

An Introduction to Marxist Economic Theory

by Ernest Mandel  
78 pp. \$2.15

Capitalism in Crisis

by Dick Roberts  
128 pp. \$2.35

Empiricism and its Evolution

by George Novack  
164 pp. \$3.80

From Lenin to Stalin

by Victor Serge  
160 pp. \$2.95

Leon Trotsky on China

by Leon Trotsky  
687 pp. \$8.20

History of the Russian Revolution

by Leon Trotsky  
1295 pp. \$10.00

Order from: Pathfinder Press, PO Box K208, Haymarket, 2000 (postage free).

Write for our free catalogue.

numbers, there is no reason to fear a constant, free, and frank confrontation between their ideas and ours. This confrontation is the only means through which the working class can educate itself ideologically and successfully free itself from the influence of bourgeois and petty-bourgeois ideas.

Any monopoly position accorded to Marxism

(not to speak of particular versions or interpretations of Marxism) in the ideological-cultural fields through administrative and repressive measures by the state can only lead to debasing Marxism itself from a critical science into a form of state doctrine or state religion, with a constantly declining attractive power among the toiling masses and especially the youth. This is apparent today in the USSR, where the monopoly position accorded "official Marxism" masks a real poverty of creative Marxist thought in all areas. Marxism, which is critical thought *par excellence*, can flourish only in an atmosphere of full freedom of discussion and constant confrontation with other currents of thought, ie, in an atmosphere of full ideological and cultural pluralism.

### 7. The self-defence of the workers state

Obviously, any workers state must defend itself against attempts at open overthrow and open violation of its basic laws. In a workers democracy the constitution and the penal code will forbid private appropriation of the means of production or private hiring of labor, just as the constitution and penal codes under bourgeois rule forbid individual infringement on the rights

“ . . . self-activity and self-administration . . . in the building of a socialist society will . . . extend the concepts of 'political activity,' 'political parties,' 'political programs,' and 'democratic rights' far beyond anything characteristic of political life under bourgeois democracy.”

of private property. Likewise, as long as we are not yet in a classless society, as long as proletarian class rule survives and the restoration of capitalism remains possible, the constitution and the penal code of the dictatorship of the proletariat will forbid and punish acts of armed insurrection, attempts to overthrow working-class power through violence, terrorist attacks on individual representatives of workers power, sabotage, espionage in the service of foreign capitalist states, etc. But only *proven* acts of that kind should be punishable, not general kind should be punishable, not general propaganda explicitly or implicitly favourable to a restoration of capitalism. This means that freedom of political organisation should be

granted all those, including probourgeois elements, who in actual practice respect the constitution of the workers state, ie. are not engaged in violent actions to overthrow workers power and collective property. The workers have no need to fear as a mortal danger propaganda that "incites" them to give the factories and banks back to private owners. There is little chance that a majority of them will be "persuaded" by propaganda of that type. The working class in the imperialist countries, the bureaucratised workers states, and an increasing number of semicolonial countries is strong enough not to have to reintroduce the concept of "crimes of opinion" either in its penal codes or in the daily practice of the workers state.

This is our programmatic and principled norm—unlettered political freedom for all those individuals, groups, tendencies, and parties who in practice respect collective property and the workers' constitution. This does not mean that these norms can be fully implemented irrespective of concrete circumstances. In the process of establishing and consolidating the dictatorship of the proletariat, civil war or international military interventions have been and can be unleashed by the bourgeoisie. Under conditions of civil war or foreign military intervention, ie.

**“ . . . the program of the Fourth International on the dictatorship of the proletariat . . . emerges as the only coherent and serious alternative to the twin revisions of Marxism advanced by Social Democratic reformism and Stalinist codification of monopoly rule by a usurping bureaucratic caste.”**

attempts by the former ruling classes to overthrow workers power by force, then the rules of war apply, and restrictions on the political activities of the bourgeoisie may well be called for. No social class, no state, has ever granted full rights to those actively engaged in a violent war to overthrow them. The dictatorship of the proletariat cannot act otherwise in that respect.

What is important, however, is to strictly distinguish between activities instigating violence against workers power and political activities, ideological positions, or programmatic statements that can be interpreted as favoring a restoration of capitalism. Against terror the proletarian state defends itself by

repression. Against reactionary politics and ideas it defends itself by political and ideological struggle. This is not a question of "morality" or "softness." It is essentially a question of *practical long-term effectiveness*.

The disastrous experience of Stalinism, which has systematically misused slanderous accusations of "collusion with imperialism," "espionage for foreign powers," and "antisocialist" or "antisoviet" agitation to suppress any form of political criticism, opposition, or nonconformism in the countries under the rule of a parasitic bureaucracy and which has organised barbaric repression on a mass scale under these pretexts, has created a profound (and essentially healthy) distrust of the abuse of penal, juridical, or police institutions for purposes of political repression. It is therefore necessary to stress that the use of repressive self-defense by the proletariat and its state against attempts to overthrow workers power by violence should be strictly circumscribed to *proven crimes and acts*, strictly separated from the realm of ideological, political, and cultural activities. This means, furthermore, that the Fourth International should stand for the defence and the extension of the most progressive conquests of the bourgeois-democratic revolutions in the field of penal codes and justice and should fight for their incorporation into the socialist constitutions and penal codes. These include such rights as:

a. The necessity of written law and the avoidance of retroactive delinquency. The burden of proof to be on the accuser; the assumption of innocence until proof of guilt.

b. The full right of all individuals to freely determine the nature of their defence; full immunity for legal defenders of any statements or lines of defence used in such trials.

c. Rejection of collective responsibility of social groups, families, etc.

d. Strict forbidding of any form of torture or extortion of confessions by physical or psychological pressure.

e. Extension and generalisation of public trial by jury.

f. Democratic election of all judges. The right of the mass of the toilers to recall elected judges.

Again, the fundamental guarantee against all abuses of state repression lies in the fullest participation in political activity of the toiling masses, the broadest possible socialist democracy, and the abolition of any monopoly access to weapons for privileged minorities, ie. the general armament of the proletariat (workers militias).

Furthermore, if civil war conditions make *certain* restrictions of democratic rights unavoidable, the basic nature and limitations of such restrictions should be made clearly un-



**Budapest, 1956: aftermath of Soviet invasion. Trotskyist program is only consistent revolutionary alternative to Stalinist bureaucratic rule.**

derstood. It is necessary to clearly and frankly explain before the whole working class that any such restrictions are deviations from the programmatic norm that corresponds to the historical interests of the proletariat, that they are exceptions and not the rule. This means that they should be limited to the utmost, both in scope and in time, and revoked as soon as possible. This means that the workers should be especially alerted to the need to prevent them from becoming institutionalised and elevated into the realm of principle.

It is likewise necessary to stress the direct political and material responsibility of bourgeois counterrevolution for any restrictions of socialist democracy under war conditions. This means to indicate clearly to society in its totality, and to the remnants of the former ruling classes themselves, that the way they will be dealt with

depends on themselves alone, ie. upon their practical behaviour.

The survival for the time being of powerful imperialist states and rich bourgeois classes in the world imposes a situation of more or less permanent *potential* class confrontation on a world scale, and therefore of more or less *potential* civil war. But the obvious need for the workers states to protect themselves against the *threat* of foreign imperialist intervention does not at all imply the identification of conditions of *potential* civil war with those of *actual* civil war, an argument that the Stalinists of all shades have continually used to justify the strangling of workers democracy in the countries under the rule of a parasitic bureaucracy. Furthermore, the establishment of monolithic one-party rule in a workers state does not strengthen its capacity for self-defence against imperialist aggression. The

very opposite is true. The existence of a system of socialist democracy would make it much more difficult for the imperialists to undertake military aggression under the pretext of "defence of freedom." A high level of political understanding and conviction on the part of the toiling masses; a high level of political activity, mobilisation, and alertness; an internationalist education and activity of the proletariat all help to transform a workers state into a powerful pole of attraction for the international working class.

**"Political freedom under workers democracy therefore implies freedom of organisation and freedom for independent women's liberation, national liberation, and youth movements, ie, movements much broader than the working class in the scientific sense of the word . . ."**

Of course, any workers state must develop a modern military and intelligence defence system against hostile capitalist states, but the support of the international working class is a thousand times more effective for self-defence than a powerful secret police continually in search of "foreign infiltrators" and "spies." In the long run, police methods generally weaken the capacity for self-defence of the victorious proletariat against foreign enemies.

Finally, it should be stressed that the main problem today in the Soviet Union, China, and the East European workers states is not the danger of capitalist restoration under conditions of war or civil war. The main problem facing the working class in these countries is the dictatorial control over economic, political, and social life by a privileged bureaucratic caste. Under these present conditions it is all the more important to place the central stress on the defence of the democratic rights of all against the restrictions imposed by the bureaucracy.

#### **8. A fundamental aspect of the program for socialist revolution**

The balance sheet of fifty years of bureaucratic power, beginning with the rise of the Stalin regime in the Soviet Union, and of twenty-five years of crisis of world Stalinism can be summarised as follows:

a. In spite of all specific differences between the various European and Asian workers states and in spite of all the changes that have occurred there, all remain characterised by the absence of institutionalised and constitutionally guaranteed direct workers power (ie, democratically elected workers councils, or councils of workers and toiling peasants exercising direct state power). Everywhere *de facto* one-party systems exist as expressions of the complete monopoly of real power in all spheres of social life by the privileged bureaucracies. The absence of the right to form tendencies within the single party, the negation of real democratic centralism in the Leninist sense of the word, reinforces that monopoly in the exercise of state power. The parasitic nature



Under workers democracy, political freedom includes right of independent women's movement to organise and carry out activities.

of the materially privileged bureaucracies furthermore implies that to various degrees momentous additional obstacles are placed on the road to advancing the world socialist revolution and building a socialist society; the transition from capitalism to socialism becomes bogged down, creativity is stifled, and tremendous amounts of social wealth are misused and wasted.

b. In spite of many partial criticisms of the existing political and economic system in the USSR and the other bureaucratized workers states by various ideological currents that have developed since the postwar crisis of Stalinism (Titoism, Maoism, Castroism, "Eurocommunism," and left centrism of the Italian, Spanish, and West German types, etc) none of these currents has put forward a fundamental alternative to the Stalinist model in the USSR. Against that bureaucratic power structure none offer a coherent alternative of *democratic direct working class power*. No real understanding of the problem of Stalinism is possible without a Marxist analysis of the bureaucracy as a specific social phenomenon. No real alternative to rule by the bureaucracy (or restoration of capitalism) is possible without institutionalising direct workers power through democratically elected workers councils (workers and toiling peasants councils) with a multiparty system and full democratic rights for all toilers, within a system of planned and democratically centralised self-management of the economy by the associated producers.

**" . . . it is the free and democratic self-organisation of the toiling masses, dialectically combined with the political clarification made possible by a revolutionary vanguard party in the leadership, that represents the best chance for the conquest and continuous exercise of power by the working class itself."**

The so-called Eurocommunist current, while accentuating its criticisms of the dogmas and practices of the Soviet and East European bureaucracies, and while broadening its polemics with the Kremlin, proposes at the most a reform of the worst excesses of Stalinist rule rather than a revolutionary change. The "Eurocommunist" parties have not cut their umbilical cord with the Soviet bureaucracy and

continue to offer "objectivist" justifications and apologies for the past crimes of the bureaucracy and many aspects of the present forms of bureaucratic rule. Furthermore, in the imperialist countries their general policy of class collaboration and upholding the bourgeois order even in face of big explosions of mass struggle of necessity limits their claims to respect democracy inside the labor movement, particularly within the mass organisations that they control and within their own parties. In their critiques they have systematically obscured the differences between bourgeois and workers democracy and, under the guise of combatting the one-party system in the USSR, Eastern Europe, and China, in reality defend the concept that the only alternative to the rule of the bureaucracy through a single party is acceptance of parliamentary institutions built on the bourgeois model, plus refusal to question the existence of the bourgeois state. In this way they reintroduce into the labor movement today the general thesis of classical Social Democracy with regard to the "peaceful" and "gradual" transition to socialism.

In the light of all these failures, the program of the Fourth International on the dictatorship of the proletariat, direct working class rule through elected workers councils and plurality of soviet parties emerges as the only coherent and serious alternative to the twin revisions of Marxism advanced by Social Democratic reformism and Stalinist codification of monopoly rule by a usurping bureaucratic caste. This program, which represents in its main lines the continuity of the tradition from the writings of Marx and Engels on the Paris Commune through Lenin's *State and Revolution*, through the documents of the first congresses of the Communist International on the dictatorship of the proletariat, has been further enriched in the light of the successive analyses of proletarian revolutions and bureaucratic degeneration or deformation of workers states, first by Trotsky in the *Revolution Betrayed* and in the founding programmatic documents of the Fourth International, and later by the successive international gatherings of the Fourth International after World War II. The present document summarises the present thinking of the revolutionary Marxists on this key aspect of the program for socialist revolution.

1917, the Labour Council's resolutions against recruiting and the Perth Conference decisions in 1918. The Leftward movement in the Labour Party, culminating in the formation of the industrial section in New South Wales, was partly inspired by I.W.W. propaganda. A.W. Buckley and at least one other leading spirit in the section were ex-members of the organisation. To the same influence must be attributed the increasing militancy of industrial labour in the period 1914-19. It partly inspired both the great Coal Strike of 1916 and the General Strike of 1917. The widespread ramifications of the latter stoppage are best explained by the existence of a general spirit in favour of mass action—a sort of 'let-us-try-a-general-strike' feeling. The crudity and ineptitude of its execution, however, was not the fault of the I.W.W., who had they been on this side of prison bars, would never have countenanced the utterly unscientific extension of that dispute.

“ . . . the frame-up of the IWW twelve was organised in order to destroy their influence within the working class and to break the back of the anti-war movement.”

“But philosophically the interest of the I.W.W. lies in the fact that it was the first body to offer effectively to the Australian workers an ideal of emancipation alternative to the somewhat threadbare Fabianism of the Labour Party. Accordingly its most permanent achievement was the birth of an industrial union agitation, framed on scientific lines as contrasted with the swallowing process of the A.W.U. amalgamation, and this time supported by many official leaders of unionism throughout Australia.”

#### Lessons for today

What lessons can be learned from the history of the IWW? Does its struggle have any relevance to the



The IWW twelve: government organised frame-up to break back of anti-war movement.

needs of workers today?

The Industrial Workers of the World were, first and foremost, revolutionaries. They had no faith in the capacity of the capitalist system to satisfy the needs of workers. They waged an all-out class struggle against the system. They were internationalists to the core. They succeeded, through their propaganda and their actions, in winning large numbers of Australian workers to an understanding of the link between the class struggle and imperialist war.

The IWW carried out an uncompromising struggle against the opportunist labor bureaucracy. It called on workers to make a complete break with the politics of the capitalist system and to put an end to class collaboration. It made no concessions

to parliamentarism. It saw the salvation of the workers only in mass struggles in united organisation. The very watchword of the IWW was ORGANISE! Above all, the IWW demonstrated, in practice, that Australian workers are in no way exceptional in the ranks of the international labor movement. Under conditions of social crisis, given the leadership of a determined body of revolutionaries armed with a program of class struggle, Australian workers have shown their willingness to take the road of revolution. What the IWW showed, also, was that a small organisation can, if inspired by correct ideas, develop rapidly into a powerful revolutionary force.

Why, then, did the IWW disappear from the scene? Why was it unable to

lead Australian workers to a victorious revolution?

Under the attacks of the government the backbone of the organisation was broken. But not a single one of the leaders capitulated and *Direct Action* went down fighting, denouncing the war to the very end. When the IWW was declared illegal at the end of 1916 successive levies of IWW members filled the gaols, while others rose to take their places agitating on the streets and in the work places. Yet despite all this idealism, sacrifice, courage, and determination on the part of its members the IWW died. Even though a mass campaign eventually won the freedom of its leaders, and despite the wide influence it exerted at its highpoint, the IWW did not survive the war as a significant force.

#### Revolutionary party needed

The IWW failed because it was not a Marxist-Leninist revolutionary party. It was not organised as a party, but as a union, a very militant union but still an all inclusive union-type body rather than a party organised around a definite program and selecting its cadres on that basis.

“ . . . the IWW was the first body to offer the Australian workers an ideal of emancipation alternative to the somewhat threadbare Fabianism of the Labour Party.”

The formation of the Communist Party in the early 1920s was seen by many as the beginning of the process of constructing the Bolshevik-type party that would lead the socialist revolution in Australia. But the cruel phenomenon of the Stalinist degeneration of the Soviet Union and the international communist parties led to the collapse of the Communist Party as a revolutionary force.

The biggest steps since the 1920s in constructing the indispensable

revolutionary workers party in this country have come with the revival of Trotskyism beginning with the antiwar movement in the 1960s. The weekly newspaper of the Socialist Workers Party, the Australian section of the Fourth International, is named *Direct Action* after the old IWW paper.

Australian Trotskyism today aims to reproduce, on the higher basis of the scientific class-struggle doctrines of Marxism-Leninism, the militancy and will to struggle and win which characterised the pioneers of the IWW.

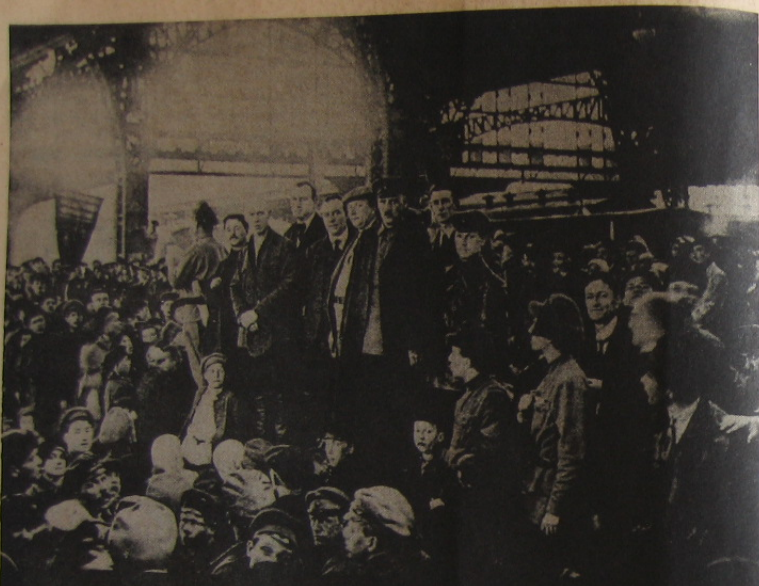


(The Commonwealth Government is floating a further £10,000,000 for the War Chest. The pressless calls upon inventory to "show a patriotic spirit . . . especially as no useful use is entailed . . . the rate of interest being far higher than in normal times.")

FAT (intoxicated with "patriotism"): "LONG LIVE THE WAR! HIP, HIP, HOORAY! FILL 'EM UP AGAIN!"

This *Direct Action* cartoon earned Tom Barker a sentence of 12 months hard labor.





Railway workers meeting, Petrograd, 1917.

# Socialist democracy and the dictatorship of the proletariat

Resolution of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International

The current debate in the international labor movement over different conceptions of socialist democracy is the most deepgoing since the years following the Russian Revolution of October 1917. The intensification of the crisis of East and West European Stalinism and Maoism and the growing crisis of the bourgeois political order in Western Europe have brought this debate out of the realm of more or less academic polemics into the field of practical politics. A clear position on this question is required to advance the processes toward socialist revolution in the West and political revolution in the bureaucratized workers states. It is therefore necessary for the Fourth International to state its programmatic positions.

## 1. What is the dictatorship of the proletariat?

The fundamental difference between reformists and centrists of all varieties on the one hand, and revolutionary Marxists, i.e. Bolshevik-Leninists, on the other regarding the conquest of state power, the need for a socialist revolution, the nature of the proletarian state, and the meaning of the dictatorship of the proletariat does *not* lie in defence of a multiparty system by the former and a one-party system by the latter. Nor does it lie in defence of unrestricted democratic freedoms by the former and defence of severe restrictions, or even suppression, of democratic freedoms by the latter. Any attempt to identify the difference between reformists and revolutionists primarily in this way distorts the basic lessons of three-quarters of a century of historical experiences with revolutions and counterrevolutions and objectively represents a grave concession to reformism itself.

The fundamental differences between reformists and revolutionary Marxists on the key issue of state power consist of:

a. The clear recognition by revolutionary Marxists of the *class* nature of all states and of the state apparatus as an instrument for maintaining class rule.

b. The illusion upheld by the reformists that "democracy" or "democratic state institutions" stand above classes and the class struggle.

c. The clear recognition by revolutionary Marxists that the state apparatus and state institutions of even the most democratic bourgeois states serve to uphold the power and rule of the capitalist class and cannot be instruments with which to overthrow that rule and transfer power from the capitalist class to the working class.

d. The clear recognition by revolutionary Marxists, flowing from these considerations, that the conquest of power by the working class requires the destruction of the bourgeois state apparatus, in the first place of the repressive apparatus of the bourgeoisie.

e. The necessary conclusion drawn by revolutionary Marxists as a consequence: that the working class can exercise state power only within the framework of state institutions of a type different from those of the bourgeois state, state institutions arising out of sovereign and democratically elected and centralized workers councils (soviets), with the fundamental characteristics outlined by Lenin in *State and Revolution*—the election of all functionaries, judges, leaders of the workers or workers and peasants militias, and all delegates representing the toilers in state institutions; regular rotation of elected officials; restriction of their income to that of skilled workers; the right to recall them at any time; parallel exercise of legislative and executive power by soviet-type institutions; radical reduction of the number of permanent functionaries and greater and greater transfer of administrative functions to bodies run by the toilers. In other words, a qualitative growth of direct democracy as contrasted to indirect, representative democracy. As Lenin said, the workers state is the first state in human history that upholds the rule of the majority of the population against exploitative and oppressive minorities. "Instead of the special institutions of a privileged minority (privileged officialdom, the chiefs of the standing army), the majority itself can directly fulfill all these functions, and the more the functions of a state power are performed by the people as a whole, the less need there is for the existence of this power." (*State and Revolution*, *Collected Works*, Vol. 25, pp. 419-420) Thus, the dictatorship of the proletariat is nothing other than a workers democracy. It is in this sense that the dictatorship of the proletariat begins to wither away almost from its inception.

The concept of the dictatorship of the proletariat, which summarises all these points, is a basic part of the Marxist theory of the state, of the proletarian revolution, and of the process toward building a classless society. The word "dictatorship" has a concrete meaning in that context: it is a mechanism for the disarmament

and expropriation of the bourgeois class and the exercise of state power by the working class, a mechanism to prevent any reestablishment of private property in the means of production and thus any reintroduction of the exploitation of wage-earners by capitalists. But it in no way means dictatorial rule over the vast majority of people. The founding congress of the Communist International stated explicitly that "proletarian dictatorship is the forcible suppression of the resistance of the exploiters, ie, an insignificant minority of the population, the landowners and capitalists. It follows that proletarian dictatorship must inevitably entail not only a change in democratic forms and institutions, generally speaking, but precisely such a change as provides an unparalleled extension of the actual enjoyment of democracy by those oppressed by capitalism—the toiling classes...all this implies and presents to the toiling classes, ie, the vast majority of the population, greater practical opportunities for enjoying democratic rights and liberties than ever existed before, even approximately, in the best and the most democratic bourgeois republics." ("Theses and Report on Bourgeois Democracy and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat," Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 28, pp. 464-465)

... the working class can exercise state power only within state institutions of a type different from those of the bourgeois state, state institutions arising out of sovereign and democratically elected and centralised workers councils . . . "

Against the now avowedly programmatic revisionism of many Communist parties and centrist formations, the Fourth International defends these classical concepts of Marx and Lenin. A socialist society is not possible without the collective ownership of the means of production and the social surplus product, economic planning and administration by the working class as a whole through democratically centralised workers councils, ie, planned self-management by the toilers. No such socialisation is possible unless the capitalists are economically and politically expropriated and state power is wielded by the working class.

Especially after the tragic Chilean experience, which confirmed so many previous lessons of history, the Kautskian reformist concept now

defended by the so-called Eurocommunist parties, the Japanese CP, and several other CPs as well as centrist formations, according to which the labor movement can fully attain its goals within the framework of bourgeois-parliamentary institutions through reliance on parliamentary elections and gradual conquest of "positions of power" within these institutions, must be energetically opposed and denounced for what it is: a cover-up for abandonment of the struggle for the conquest of state power by the proletariat; a cover-up for abandonment of the struggle for the expropriation of the bourgeoisie, for abandonment of a policy of consistent defence of the class interests of the working class; a substitution of ever more systematic class collaboration with the bourgeoisie for the policy of consistent class struggle; and flowing therefrom, a growing tendency to capitulate to the class interests of the bourgeoisie at moments of decisive economic, political, and social crisis. Far from reducing the costs of "social transformation" or from ensuring a peaceful, albeit slower, transition to socialism, this policy, if it should decisively determine the political attitude of the toilers in a period of unavoidable overall class confrontation, can only lead to bloody defeats and mass slaughters of the German, Spanish, and Chilean type.

## 2. For a one-party or a multiparty system?

In no way does the Marxist theory of the state entail the concept that a one-party system is a necessary precondition or feature of workers power, a workers state, or the dictatorship of the proletariat. In no theoretical document of Marx, Engels, Lenin, or Trotsky and in no programmatic document of the Third International under Lenin did such a defence of the one-party system ever appear. The theories developed later on, such as the crude Stalinist theory that throughout history social classes have always been represented by a single party, are historically wrong and serve only as apologies for the monopoly of political power usurped by the Soviet bureaucracy and its ideological heirs in other bureaucratised workers states, a monopoly based on the political expropriation of the working class. History—including the latest events in the People's Republic of China—has on the contrary confirmed the correctness of Trotsky's position that "classes are heterogeneous; they are torn by inner antagonisms and arrive at the solution of common problems not otherwise than through an inner struggle of tendencies, groups and parties.... An example of only one party corresponding to one class is not to be found in the whole course of political history—provided, of course, you do

not take the police appearance for the reality." (*The Revolution Betrayed*, p.267) This was true for the bourgeoisie under feudalism. It is true for the working class under capitalism. It will remain true for the working class under the dictatorship of the proletariat and in the process of building socialism.

In that sense, the freedom of organisation of different groups, tendencies, and parties without ideological restrictions is a precondition for the exercise of political power by the working class. Without such freedom there can be no genuine, elected, democratic workers councils, nor the exercise of real power by such workers councils. Socially, it is a precondition for the working class collectively, as a class, arriving at a common or at least a majority viewpoint on the innumerable problems of tactics, strategy, and even theory (program) that are involved in the titanic task of building a classless society under the leadership of the traditionally oppressed, exploited, and downtrodden masses. Unless there is freedom to organise political groups, tendencies, and parties there can be no real socialist democracy.

Revolutionary Marxists reject the substitutionist, paternalistic, and "apparatus" (bureaucratic) deviation from Marxism that sees the socialist revolution, the conquest of state power, and the wielding of state power under the dictatorship of the proletariat as a task of the revolutionary party acting "in the name of" the class or, in the best of cases, "with the support of" the class.

If the dictatorship of the proletariat is to mean what the very words say, and what the theoretical tradition of both Marx and Lenin explicitly contains, ie, the rule of the working class as a class (of the "associated producers"), if the emancipation of the proletariat can be achieved only through the activity of the proletariat itself and not through a passive proletariat being educated for emancipation by benevolent and enlightened revolutionary administrators, then it is obvious that the leading role of the revolutionary party both in the conquest of power and in the building of a classless society can be only to lead the mass activity of the class politically, to win political hegemony in a class that is increasingly engaged in self-activity, to struggle within the class for a majority support for its proposals, through political and not administrative or repressive means. Under the dictatorship of the proletariat state power is exercised by democratically elected workers councils. The revolutionary party struggles for a correct line and for political leadership within these workers councils, without substituting itself for them. Party and state—and still more party apparatus and state apparatus—remain strictly separate and distinct entities. Further-



V.I. Lenin, founder of Bolshevik Party and author of *State and Revolution*.

more, the goal should be to reduce the apparatus of the party.

But genuinely representative, democratically elected workers councils can exist only if the masses have the right to elect whomever they want without distinction, and without restrictive preconditions as to the ideological or political convictions of the elected delegates. Likewise, workers councils can function democratically only if all the elected delegates enjoy the right to form groups, tendencies, and parties, to have access to the mass media, to present their different platforms before the masses and to have them debated and tested by experience. Any restriction of party affiliation restricts the freedom of the proletariat to exercise political power, ie, restricts workers democracy, which would be contrary both to our program and to the historical interests of the working class.

If one says that only parties and organisations that have no bourgeois (or petty-bourgeois) program or ideology, or are not engaged in anti-socialist or anti-soviet propaganda and/or agitation are to be legalised, how is one to determine the dividing line? Will parties with a majority of working-class members but with a bourgeois ideology be forbidden? How can such a position be reconciled with free elections for workers councils? What is the dividing line

Keep in touch  
Subscribe to the socialist press

## Direct Action

Direct Action is Australia's leading socialist weekly. Each issue reports on the struggles of the working class and its allies here and around the world. Radical activists can't afford to miss it. Take out a subscription and get every issue sent to you at no extra cost.

Introductory rates:

\$2 for 10 issues

Regular rate (renewals):

\$7.50 for six months (25 issues);  \$15 for one year (50 issues)

## Socialist Worker

Socialist Worker is the magazine reflecting the views of revolutionary socialism. Each issue deals with key questions of socialist theory in a clear and readable way. It relates the Marxist analysis to the political problems facing socialists today.

\$4 for one year (four issues)

## Special Offer

Here is a special offer to readers of Direct Action and Socialist Worker.

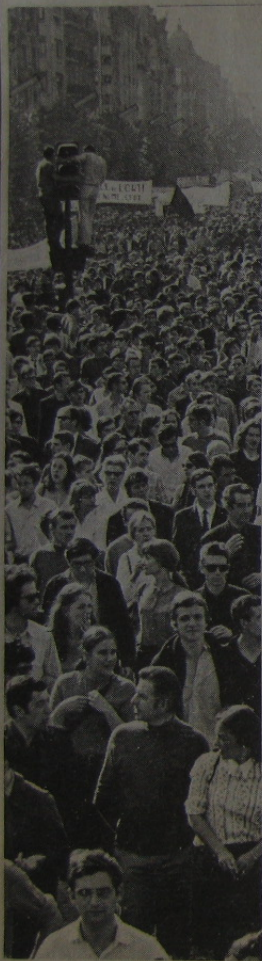
One year of Direct Action and Socialist Worker for only \$17.50

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Postcode \_\_\_\_\_

Return to or send note to: Direct Action/Socialist Worker, PO Box K208, Haymarket, 2000 (cheques etc to Direct Action)



June 1, 1968: Paris demonstration