

INTERNATIONAL

For Workers Power Self-Management Socialism

SENATE RESULTS: Their Meaning For A.L.P. Militants

For revolutionary socialists the most important lesson of the November 21st Senate elections is that the masses' attachment to parliamentarism — looking for solutions to their problems through parliamentary action — is still almost completely unshaken.

The decline in the standing of the Gorton Government (Liberal-Country Party coalition) to some 37.5% of the national vote (a reduction of some 5.5% on its October 1969 House of Representatives vote) cannot be interpreted as a denial of this in the absence of any significant rise in informal votes or in the number of non-voters.

On the contrary, the discontents of erstwhile Liberal voters with the Government's performance, led to consideration of the claims of alternative political formations that they would perform better in the national parliament.

The defectors from support of the government, found their new "saviours" in a variety of smaller political parties and independents, the latter mostly standing on a single plank platform.

Some of them voted DLP, because of fear of the "Asian red hordes" in respect of whom the Gorton government "was being insufficiently intransigent"; others because the DLP was projecting an image for the unshocked of concern for the family. Others again swung to the Australia Party, on the score that the time has now come to get out of Vietnam and in response to its projected more modern image in contradiction to that of the major parties.

Others supported independent candidates out of particular concern with issues such as education, pensions, probate duties, etc.

None of these voters moved to the Labor Party, the vote for which registered a decline by some 4% to about 42.6% in comparison with its October 1969 total.

Two Struggles

The still predominant right wing of the Labor Party draws the conclusion that it must go still further to the right — to a contest of personalities having a basic allegiance to the establishment — if it is to be the beneficiary of the movement of the electorate away from the government. This, also is the direction continually urged on it by the capitalist press, which demands drastic action against the left wing, particularly the latter's outstanding manifestation in Victoria.

This view has the support of the majority of the ALP Federal Executive. But this majority's attempt to dim the Victorian left wing leadership and impose right wing control, is proving to be anything but a pushover. The section of the Victorian left wing leadership which stood firm has solid activist backing against

Federal Executive intervention in disregard of rank and file sentiments.

It properly rejects the perspective of a Wilson-type government as being any viable alternative to the Liberal government as far as the interests of the masses are concerned. And because of its spirit, activity and union basis, it constitutes the present vanguard of a socialist-oriented left wing in the Labor Party and the lodestar for the party's left wing nationally in the continuing struggle to isolate and defeat the right wing.

So the working class is involved in two concurrent struggles. The one concerns the imperative of winning elections and erecting a Labor government; the other concerns the same imperative but with the qualification that such a government must be erected on the basis of a policy in conflict with the interests of the establishment.

As yet, the majority of the working class has not advanced to recognition of how essential and valid the second perspective is, but rather still adheres to the view that "a bad Labor government is better than a good Liberal government".

Can Whitlam Win?

But it is by no means inevitable that a right wing, essentially pro-status quo Labor leadership will achieve the position of government in the next period. The electorate set up negatives the principle of one vote, one value" and favours the government. As well, on the Senate voting pattern, the DLP preference and a proportion of Australia Party and independent preferences will assist the government.

On the other hand, the smaller parties will not be strong enough to enter the 120 separate electoral contests, and many electors critical of the government will have to decide whether to prefer the "moderate" Labor position.

But for the reasons above, and except a critical internal situation emerges, it is not indicated that the drift away from the government will necessarily benefit the Labor Party.

These correctives to the too-optimistic expectations of a right wing Labor parliamentary victory allow a more rational examination of the second perspective of establishing Labor as a principled anti-capitalist party and as being a more effective working class political force as a minority party than a right wing Labor government.

There is no call to deny the fact that a more left wing party such as the Victorian Branch, attracts less mass support in today's political climate, than do the other State Branches. But there is no doubt that the acceptability for the Victorians of the validity of extra-parliamentary action (note the much greater Victorian mass response to the Vietnam Moratorium demonstrations led by Labor figures) is recognised by the establishment as a far greater threat to its power than the circumscribed parliamentary initiatives of a right wing Labor government.

Thus, even viewing the situation from the narrow angle of expediency or "realism", we confront the following situation: (i) a right wing Labor parliamentary victory is not really indicated for the next period in the absence of an emerging crisis situation; (ii) consequently, the struggle to establish

a principled militant party policy is not a factor responsible for labelling a "Labor" electoral victory (if such a struggle will transform the party into a much more effective force in the workers' inevitable struggle against capitalist rule; (iv) the transformed party will confront a future election contest in a critical situation with every possibility of success in conjunction with the extra-parliamentary mass movement implicit in its policy perspective; and (v) this conjunction will quickly pose the reality of political power resting in the hands of the workers through their network of elected committees and the eclipse of the parliamentary institution.

RALLY TO THE MILITANT STRUGGLE OF THE VICTORIAN BRANCH VANGUARD!

THEIR VICTORY IS ESSENTIAL IN THE WORKERS' INTERESTS!

N. 28/11/70

REPORT FROM VICTORIA ENTER THE SAVIOURS'

The struggle over the future leadership and orientation of the Victorian Branch of the Australian Labor Party continues.

At present it appears that the struggle may be resolved in a "Bonapartist" way.

Neither the Right wing (composed of the majority of the Federal Executive and their supporters in Victoria), nor the Left wing (based almost wholly on local unions and ALP rank-and-file with few interstate allies), can at present impose their will on the situation, turning the Victorian branch definitely in either a pro-imperialist or socialist direction.

This position of stalemate allows a

third group, holding the balance of power, to emerge as the decisive group.

This group is led by Bob Hawke (A.C.T.U. President) and Ted Innes (former Treasurer of the Victorian branch), and has now apparently been joined by Dr. Cairns. These "figures" pose as "saviours" and "unifiers", playing a classical bonapartist balancing role, now siding with the Right and now with the Left, holding the balance of power and hoping to gain the leadership of the branch.

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The Sydney Morning Herald, Monday, Nov. 23, 1970



Mr Whitlam and Dr Cairns confer at yesterday's Victorian ALP meeting.

from page: What is happening INSIDE the Victorian ALP?

Of course, the situation in the Victorian branch differs from situations in which dissenting groups prevail, in that neither the right wing nor the left wing is "exhausted" or resigned to defeat.

Though, according to Maximilian Walk, the *SUN-HERALD* and *FINANCIAL REVIEW* (satire and well informed political correspondent, and member of the Federal Leadership) willing to accept the accession to leadership of the Hawke-Innes group (see *SUN-HERALD* 21/1/76, ALP all this group is willing for William's resignation and the left wing to allow it to 100% safe, "liberal" alternative government party the bourgeoisie has an trait.

The Hawke-Innes group have at this stage been led by Dr. Cairns, which is strengthened by the fact that Dr. Cairns' joining them ensures greater support from the rank-and-file for this group, which up until now had little support. Further, if divides the left wing's support and leads the Hawke-Innes group would need moral credit, for Dr. Cairns' move to the left wing is a leader of the movement to withdraw Australian troops from Vietnam. Cairns can pose as the embodiment of "peace" and "democracy" with more credibility than Hawke or Innes, who have played a blatantly opportunist role in the affairs of the Victorian branch in the few months.

The most significant development in the recent events in this branch of the ALP, was the emergence of a new left wing willing to struggle against the right wing elements in the main party of the working class, with an extra-parliamentary orientation, and with considerable support among the ALP's rank-and-file and affiliated unions.

The CPA's advice to this new left wing has exhibited that classical sectarianism we have had reason to criticise before as inhibitory to the development of a socialist democratic society. The ALP, the main party of the working class in Australia. The long continuing belief that the CPA's opinion was the masses away from the ALP and led them to believe as old as the CPA itself. For the CPA to break with this aspect of the party's legacy of sectarianism is well as a step, but this legacy, is not to be easy or certain as a particular comrades would have been reluctant to do so, but comrades share all the sectarian dogma of the CPA's leaders.

This article will attempt to provide the background to what has been said to be a "bolshevik" group is attempting to induce leadership in Victoria, that the new left wing and remains a minority, but the full support of revolutionary socialists, and that the CPA's advice to this wing has been such to discourage its further development and realisation.

The story so far . . .

In 1955, the Victorian ALP split, with the formation of an extra-parliamentary wing being driven out by an alliance ranging from Maoist sectarians to genuine socialists. This alliance, based initially on the local union (perhaps the only left in their leadership then elsewhere in Australia), and using their bloc vote at annual conferences, exercised an influence and semi-dictatorial power over the branch. All rationalised on the grounds of preventing any comeback by the "groups". At the same time the Victorian branch took up and defended the most left wing positions in the ALP, particularly on the Vietnam war.

By the emergence of a fifth column, a group around Innes and Hawke attempted to take the leadership of the branch, and remained a minority. But such a division provided an opportunity for the Federal Executive (the majority of which wanted a "liberal" alternative to gain the support of the bourgeoisie and electoral assets, and to which the executive of the Victorian branch was an embarrassment and obstacle) to intervene, divide and conquer the executive and displace the branch. With the acquiescence and collaboration of the local union, the Federal Executive, this intervention was carried through in the third quarter of this year.

The emergence of a fifth column within the Victorian ALP led to the formation of the Federal Executive to reduce this (left) power base was to effectively divide the old left wing group on the old Victorian branch.

The object of the Federal Executive intervention was, in the words of a pamphlet distributed by the Victorian branch, "to ensure that the CPA's influence in the ALP in order that in both the state and

national spheres the Australian Labor Party could be seen as a 'left' political alternative to the Liberal Party Country Party.

The Federal Executive operation against the Victorian executive was not only encouraged by the Hawke-Innes minority on the Victorian branch, but also by the official left wing in N.S.W. the ALP's right wing stronghold. Ignoring the political implications of this intervention, placing emphasis upon principle, these "lefts" in N.S.W. considered the move because they hoped it would be a precedent and followed by intervention in N.S.W. In less than the Right's domination and provide places in the team for them. The Right's domination in N.S.W. is a product of union domination of the branch, the action having predominantly Right Wing leadership; this situation, in turn, reflects the backwardness politically of the working class. Rather than seek to change this the N.S.W. "lefts" prefer to manoeuvre for a share of right wing power at the expense of moving the class forward.

The first stage of Federal intervention, entailing the dismissal of the Victorian executive and the setting up of an "Advisory Council" (dominated by the Innes-Hawke) led to draw up a new branch constitution for an submission to the Federal Executive, was completed by September. Slowly but surely, the left wing, with some new leaders from the ranks, fought back. Loud discussions by the members who were in favour of intervention, took place all over the State, and publication of *INSIDE LABOR* began. The new constitution was completed by a meeting called by the Lefts for November 1st, 800 attendees, despite vague threats and warnings from Federal officials, and rejected and denounced the intervention.

The November 22nd meeting

The calling of this November 1st meeting forced the Federal Executive's hand, and in order to undertake that meeting, an "official" rank-and-file meeting was set down for November 22nd. That meeting was originally intended to hear reports and there were normalisations. The left wing made it clear it would attend but not accept that procedure; in the event resolutions were allowed within a certain framework. Originally, Mick Young, the right wing Federal Secretary, was to be the main speaker at the meeting, and was followed by Dr. Jim Cairns. Young, the Left, who proved the main resolution which was not totally capitulated to the Federal Executive.

At the November 22nd meeting, with one exception, no leading right wing figure in the Victorian branch or on the Federal Executive, spoke. They all were absent, the right wing figures of the left - Cairns, Hawke, Professor Ian Turner, Gordon Bryant, etc. - were rolled out to "do" the Left.

Cairns (a member of the "Advisory Council") moved the main resolution at the November 22nd meeting. The motion was a capitulation to Federal intervention, accepting it to be done and accepting it in the future.

The specific elements in Cairns' motion (attended by Hawke) were:

- (1) to leave the drafting of the new branch constitution to the Advisory Council;
- (2) to request the Advisory Council to submit their draft constitution to a meeting of members and affiliated unions on January 30th, 1976, but only for "full discussion and comment", before submitting it to the Federal Executive;
- (3) to request the Federal Executive to decide the final form of the new constitution, and
- (4) to request the Federal Executive to bring a new constitution into force by the end of February 1976.

An amendment was then moved by the Left.

The specific elements in this Hogg-Hartley amendment were:

- (1) to request the Federal Executive to call a special rank-and-file conference to elect an interim executive to draft the new constitution instead of the Federal Executive-appointed Advisory Council;
- (2) to bind this interim executive to a special committee to be formed with the rank-and-file submitting an original special rank-and-file constitution which would "amend and finalise" the new constitution

the Left. Percy Johnson (secretary of the Trade Union Defence Committee) and Ken Carr (secretary of a group of militant unions) produced the best arguments on this point. Carr was especially what was at stake was an ALP fighting for socialism or an ALP pre-occupied with winning elections at all Wisconsin-type Labor government in power.

The last speaker in the debate was Moss Cass, the only Federal MP who has consistently opposed the intervention and supported the Victorian left. He moved the following amendment which accepted the motion as it stood, but came down on the side of the Hogg-Hartley proposal for the rank-and-file to determine the future of the branch. The main elements of his amendment were:

- (1) the name as (i) in Cairns' motion;
- (2) the same as (1) in Cairns' motion but to be held in a rank-and-file meeting would "amend and finalise" the Advisory Council's constitution; the same as (a) (i) of the Hogg-Hartley

amendment; (iv) the same as (iv) of Cairns' motion; (v) Cairns' motion repeats Cairns' proposal. He spoke for 30 minutes of the (29-hour debate). He attacked the Hogg-Hartley amendment as "utopianistic" and "impossible". He stated that if it was accepted, there was no going back. He defended the proposal for a new organisation which would consist of a questionnaire form in the meeting and attend the meeting that the Advisory Council would have some delegates of the rank-and-file's rights. His way, he asserted, allowed the Victorians some say, he did. And at the end of his speech, he delivered a stinging criticism of the right wing's rights of the rank-and-file and naming every body that the Federal Executive would "do" to change the constitution worked out by the Advisory Council and the rank-and-file. Significantly, he made no attack on Moss' amendment after the event, he could not support it.

As everyone knows, the supporters of the Hawke-Innes-Cairns group combined with the right wing to support the Hawke amendment, 878-550. Thus the supporters of the Hawke-Innes-Cairns group combined with the left (NIE to carry Moss' amendment, by about 2-1, against the right. Moss' amendment should be noted, gives the Advisory Council a pre-emptive veto and the carrying of this amendment gives rank-and-file endorsement.

Though under the terms of the Moss Cass amendment there are no rank-and-file meetings set down for January 30-31. This meeting is supposed to "finalise" the future of the branch. So the Left has to fight another day.

The ball is now in the Federal Executive's court, when they are allowed it to try for the time being. They have on their hands the Advisory Council dominated by the Hawke-Innes-Cairns group, which collaborated with them to deposit the old executive, and collaborated with them and the local right wing to defeat the Left at the November 22nd meeting, but which is also capable of combining with the left (and the bigger group in Victoria) in attempt to extract certain concessions from the Federal Executive.

alternative main political leadership at this stage while standing outside the internal workings of the mainstream of the mass movement."

Instead of recognizing that "the important question is to arrive at a non-political level accuracy and recognize the need only to put a 500-ton type of the definition written, this can be said again." The CPA's leadership at this stage they can now carry through intervention in the Victorian branch mobilisation of the masses.

Their failure to encourage and aid the evolution of the left wing is only another example of the CPA's tendency to ignore and gain the satisfaction of the limited possibilities in the real labor movement, and their preference for confusing hopes with realities. This is the essence of sectarianism.

What is proposed is that in future we involve our rank-and-file in action, by implementing continually at all levels possible our policies within the community and by doing involve the community first. This very action, this involvement in the community and its help to further radicalise the party each at the same time, earn respect for the community for its aims and fold in the mass support in the form of parliamentary elections.

The one strength a left wing oriented party needs in the long term is mass support, with an active involved rank-and-file movement which has a real say in the determining of development of, and putting into effect, its aims and objectives at all levels, including the parliamentary level.

It operates in a parliamentary system. This does not mean we should accept that it is an ideal means of government. This is also the means of development and argument. It is not the intention of this report to carry such an argument.

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Despite that it is desirable that the new party structure allow for action outside parliament in pushing the party's agenda through public activities as well as trying to win government. It is necessary to raise the political consciousness of the membership and the public at large.

This passage is extracted from an article by one of the new leaders of the Victorian left.

The left intends to maintain and strengthen its organization, regardless of the results of the election. They remain optimistic about the future. As well as drawing support in their resistance to the attempts of the bourgeoisie to use the ALP into a totally reliable servant of the bourgeoisie, they need to be joined and isolated within the ALP in posing the alternative during working class struggles by its own action and through its own institutions of struggle.

H. November 24th

I said 2 see INTERNATIONAL 17, "The failed 1970 Congress of the Communist Party."

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