

**POLICE  
CORRUPTION**

**PRICE 10 CENTS**

A COMMUNIST PARTY (M-L)  
PUBLICATION

Melbourne,  
March, 1970.

All over Australia there are revelations of police corruption. All over Australia there are revelations of police violence.

People ask what is the truth about these things.

We must answer that they are essentially true but that what is being revealed is only a fraction of the whole truth. Here we will try to discuss the social roots of it all.

The police involved in these allegations are not junior policemen. They are amongst the very highest police officers. Therefore, it is a fair conclusion that this is a way of life, a whole system, in police forces. And if the revelations involve only some named policemen, it by no means follows that those not named are pure. Very, very far from it.

### **POLICE VIOLENCE**

All this occurs at a time when the police force is very busy suppressing demonstrations, acting against strikers, knocking people about, generally throwing their weight around. Moreover, in the background are sinister secret police forces in A.S.I.O. and special police. More than 100 years ago the great revolutionary Engels contrasted the present social system with the old tribal society. He said: "The shabbiest police servant . . . has more authority than all the representatives of the tribe put together, . . ." (The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State). If you think about that in Australia today, you will know its truth. The merest policeman can push you around just as he likes, he can (and does) swear your life away. The "verbal" is a well known term given to the admissions falsely alleged by policemen to have been made by people whom they "interrogate". Why is all this so?

### **THE SOCIAL SYSTEM**

The present social system is a system of exploitation. There are great factory owners and great landowners. They are led, headed, by U.S. concerns. They really do exploit the people. It is not just a figment of someone's imagination. They make immense profits. The only source of their profits are the workers. Profits can't come from anywhere else. A factory without workers is useless. The owner may disappear and not be missed but take away the workers and the factory closes down. The factory and the machines it contains only came into being by the work of other workers. The rich only get their money from the work of workers.

Australians have seen almost unprecedented speculation in shares of various kinds (particularly minerals). They have

seen immense profits made in this speculation. Not only that, the great companies and landowners have made huge profits. Prices have been raised tremendously. The currency has been inflated (by the printing of banknotes). There have been takeovers of companies. Above all, the American big businessmen and their Japanese counterparts have become dominant on the Australian scene. They are having a bonanza at Australia's expense.

Fortunes have been easily made (and lost). In the making, there is endless corruption. People who exploit other people's labour like this are corrupt. It is a corrupt system even though it is blessed as business. This is real corruption, corruption on a big scale, direct conscienceless corruption. Within it, there is all sorts of more petty corruption, bribery of this or that official, bribery of employees of rival concerns, bribery of public servants, etc. etc.

### **PEOPLE'S OPPOSITION**

And it all gives rise to opposition from workers, working people, farmers, students. Amongst the people, there is at the very least a great sense of unease, of questioning.

And when you add to all this, war in Vietnam, conscription for it, threat of Australian involvement in still bigger wars, it all goes to create a great climate of opposition. Nor is this to exhaust the list of ills. There is unrest everywhere be it amongst workers, other working people, farmers, students.

The police force is openly used to suppress opposition. Its actions at demonstrations are well known. Its actions in strikes are well known. Its actions against anyone who steps out of line are pretty well known. Always (with infinitesimal exceptions) its actions are against the protestors, against those who question the existing state of affairs.

### **POWER OF THE POLICE**

It is in a position of immense power. This is so just because it is on the side of the factory owners and landowners. It does their work. If you ask yourselves who does it serve by breaking up an anti-Vietnamese demonstration, the answer is simple. It serves those who promote the war in Vietnam. And who are they? They are the handful of people who make great profits from that war. Those who make those profits are the U.S. big business men and a few Australian big businessmen who have prostituted themselves to the U.S. So it goes on. When the police take action against strikers, again whom do they serve but the

factory owners. And it must be noted that it is precisely in time of demonstrations, strikes or "protection" of people like Johnson and Agnew that there is the greatest mobilisation and activity of police. These things really portray the real role of the police force. They are there for the special purpose of suppression of opposition and protection of the status quo. (All the other things they do, flow from this). They are very important weapons of the state apparatus. (A standing army and police are the chief instruments of state power).

The police undoubtedly share in the corruption of the present social system. They are peculiarly in a position to batten on people. They have the power. Why not sell some protection? And they do sell it.

### **ARE THE POLICE FAIR ?**

A great deal of effort has been put into building up the illusion that the police force is above classes, is impartial, that it merely administers the law equally against rich and poor. Bound up with this is the whole illusion about "democracy", about elected parliaments, about dispassionate law, equality before the law, etc. etc. Here, too, there is corruption, particularly of officials who occupy privileged positions.

### **SOCIETY IN CRISIS**

There is an acute crisis of the whole of capitalism — its ideology, politics and organisation. The workers and working people are throwing off illusions and are rebelling against capitalism. All this tends to push the reality to the fore and the illusions to the background. The crisis is not abating. It cannot and will not abate. It will get more acute. Every single aspect of capitalism is affected by it. For example, the crisis over Vietnam is far more acute than it was a decade ago; the currency instability throughout the capitalist world including Australia is far more acute than it was a decade ago; all capitalist literature and art has degenerated very acutely; the social "theories" of capitalism are not now deceiving working people to anything like the degree of the past. As part of this is the opposition to capitalism — an awakened working people. So in Australia the police force is called upon to do more openly the work that was once so largely done by deception. There always was force, police force and violence; don't let us create any illusions that there was not. But the ruling class uses dual tactics — those of deception and those of force. Deception is better for them. The point was well illustrated when it was said in parlia-

ment: "The Government failure to act against a public servant (accused of corruption) had endangered the whole edifice of the State as surely as a bomb under Parliament House". In other words, the whole capacity to deceive had been dealt a blow.

Force is not so good because it generates still further opposition. The respective parts played by deception on the one hand and force on the other vary according to the conditions. Where deception fails, force is used and where force fails, still more force is used.

As deception is fairly rapidly failing in Australia, so force is more and more used.

### **PUBLIC EXPOSURE OF POLICE**

The last 10 years have seen a very great growth in the use of police force violence and a very great growth in the public exposure of widespread police corruption. The two things go hand in hand. The position of the police force as a capitalist weapon, as the bodyguard of capitalism, leads to far greater mass opposition than ever before. Therefore the force and violence and the corruption, all of which were always there, are more fully revealed. And, as we have said, the capitalist class must resort more and more to force as its deception fails. Corruption grows because all the institutions of capitalism share capitalism's corruption and its crisis.

The spokesmen of capitalism such as Gorton, Whitlam, Askin, Bolte, come out more openly for violence. So also do the leading police officials. The police are indoctrinated with the idea of violence. Increasing police use is made of firearms, poison gas, etc. Not only is there organised police violence against strikers, demonstrators, all rebels, but the shabbiest policemen persecute their victims, particularly young people. Police violence is initiated against even young people celebrating the incoming of the new year. And so it goes on. The whole picture is one of intensification of the violence of the capitalist class through the police force, one of its two chief instruments of oppressive rule. The other weapon, the standing army, is at the moment in Australia more in the background.

As police violence increases so does the police force get isolated out as the focus of mass opposition. Hence singlets stencilled with slogans against the police undoubtedly express a mass sentiment. They got mass sales. Even the capitalists cash in on anti-police sentiments. Police reaction in prosecuting wearers of the singlets reveals that the ruling circles are very sensitive about their police force.

### **ORGANS OF A REPRESSIVE STATE**

The central lesson is clear — the Australian police forces are without any doubt weapons of oppression, weapons of class rule. They are violent and they are corrupt. This is a key class question. The workers, students, working people, are the main enemies of the police because the police are the weapon of the capitalist class, and the workers, students and working people are the main enemies of the capitalist class.

It is important to state all this as clearly and sharply as possible. This is because various strong efforts are made to build up the "prestige" of the police force, to "restore" their "image". Let us look at some of the arguments used. It is said that the police do all sorts of humane work such as handling emergencies, rescues, etc. etc. Great publicity is given to these things. The facts are commonly true enough. But they have nothing to do with the main aspect of the question and in no way detract from it. One very good reason why such publicity is given to such things is precisely to divert people from the main aspect of police activity i.e. oppression. It is said that not all policemen are bad. No doubt there is an element (not too much) of truth in this, but again it has got very little to do with the argument. The main aspect of oppression remains. Then it is said that if a policeman uses violence you can take him to court or you can get an inquiry into his conduct. This argument is used widely. It is used for example, by the Australian labor party and by the Australian renegades from Communism whom we call revisionists. Bodies like the Council for Civil Liberties ardently promote it. But again it is to beg the question and divert people from the reality of police oppression as one of the two main instruments of class oppression. Moreover, courts and inquiries are part of precisely the same state apparatus (an apparatus of oppression) as the police against whom the charge is made or into whom the inquiry proceeds.

### **WHO IS TO POSSESS STATE POWER ?**

What we are dealing with is the central political question of the struggle for state power. Which class is to hold power is the critical question of politics — the capitalists or the workers? Is the struggle for power peaceful or violent? Can there be a peaceful transition to socialism?

The Australian rulers, backed by their masters the U.S. imperialists, through their use of the Australian police

forces are giving us a very good political lesson. They are showing the essential character of their rule as one of violence and corruption. On matters that in themselves do not yet affect the question of state power they resort to ruthless police violence. How much more will they, (and do they) resort to it when the question of state power is directly in issue?

It is quite correct to oppose the police forces. The instinctive widespread and ever developing hatred of them is very healthy indeed. All over the capitalist world there is this instinctive widespread and ever developing hatred for them. All over the world the workers, students and working people are meeting police violence (illegal even to the capitalist "laws" which are based upon the old pretences of democracy) with violence. This too will and must develop into the complete ending of this system of exploitation, corruption and violence.

Capitalist so called democracy is, as it were, being hoist with its own petard. In days of the rise of capitalism and in days of its relative stability, it built up a great aura of democracy, police "fairness", law and order, etc. Now in the days of its decline and acute crisis this aura is becoming a hindrance to the free use of force that the capitalists require. The people are learning. We must oppose anyone and any action that in any way gives the slightest support to the restoration of illusions about democracy, the police force, etc.

### **WIN STATE POWER**

If private, monopoly ownership of Australian wealth and resources has produced a State which needs corruption, violence and deception to suppress the opposition of the majority of its people, surely it must follow that in the interests of this majority, the capitalist State must be smashed. A workers' State, representative of the majority would end private ownership of Australian wealth, and set out to build new relations of production—socialist relations of production.

Such a state will make it its business to stamp out corruption and deception. Its violence will be reserved for the present exploiters — the architects of capitalist corruption, violence and deception. Unprecedented democracy will be enjoyed by the vast majority, the new public owners of Australian resources and industry.