

Who is manipulating the unions?



published by the Marxist-Leninist Organization
of Canada **IN STRUGGLE!**

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an Editorial from the Montreal daily "Le Devoir" 23

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Introduction

Everywhere you look these days you can see a dangerous and spectacular increase in reactionary policies and trends of all sorts. It is happening all over the country: emergency laws of all types eliminating the right to strike; the growth of a multitude of ultra-rightist organizations which promote racism and even fascism; the beefing up of police powers. But there is one reactionary trend which warrants some special attention — anti-communism. It is apparent that all sections of the bourgeoisie, its media, and its agents in the workers movement are reviving the worst aspects of the "witch hunts" of the fifties.

The rallying cry is a familiar one: the communists must be run out of the unions. All they are interested in doing is to push their ideology and to do that they undermine trade-union democracy. The Marxist-Leninist Organization of Canada IN STRUGGLE! is publishing this booklet to respond to these false accusations with facts. We fervently hope that it will prove to be a useful tool for workers and progressives to expose the real enemies of the working class in the Canadian labour movement. It is high time that the trade-union movement stopped being the plaything of a small clique of sold-out bureaucrats and returned to being a movement which is totally and unambiguously devoted to defending workers' interests.

Marxist-Leninist Organization of Canada
IN STRUGGLE!
May 1979

Who is manipulating the unions?

The most recent convention of the Montreal CNTU Central Council, held between April 19 and 22, created quite a stir in the capitalist press. The reporters, commentators, and editorial writers generally picked up on the theme promoted by many union leaders. According to these worthies, the Central Council has been infiltrated by radicals from the far left who don't give a damn about democracy. These people are in the process of destroying the unions. Their activities turn off the "average guy" and the "rank and file", as the expression goes, who are thus discouraged from participating in their own union.

Worse still, according to *Le Devoir* editorial scribe Jean-Claude Leclerc, the manoeuvres of these "professional activists" who conduct "clandestine campaigns" bear a strange resemblance to the antics of the police and the army who "plant their agents" in popular organizations (1). Now that's the kind of situation which is guaranteed to make all true democrats like Claude Ryan, the former archbishop of the "prestigious daily of St. Sacrement Street", shudder. Ryan appears to have found in Leclerc an all-purpose vicar who is quite agile in the holy ritual of camouflaging reactionary ideology in phrases about democracy.

Who are these "activists"? What is this mysterious "far left"? Neither Leclerc, nor the other editorial writers, nor the union leaders bothered to identify them. The army and police "plant their agents indiscriminately... in all groups no matter what trend they represent", writes Leclerc. The editorial scribblers have chosen to mimic the police in not distinguishing between one political trend and another: the "far left" is the communists, the Marxist-Leninists, the Trotskyists, the Maoists and... the undercover police agents! They are all those who in one way or another are opposed to the present leadership of the unions. It doesn't really matter that they have different reasons for this opposition. It isn't relevant to explain the differences that pit them in contradiction to one another.

Now it must be admitted that this method of analysis is quite useful. When CPC (M-L) shows up somewhere with its standard "two by four" attire, the "far left" is using violence. When the League sneaks some of its members into trade-union posts, the "far left" is undemocratic.

(1) *Le Devoir*, Montreal, April 24, 1979, p. 4

When the Trotskyists set up a front organization like the RMS (Rassemblement des militants syndicaux) which organizes regular meetings of trade unionists who want to get the labour centrals to create the "workers' party", the "far left" is infiltrating... Quite a large and varied group this "far left"! It is certainly very effective this business of mixing up all together the opportunists and saboteurs with the communists.

Just how useful this sleight of hand is becomes evident when one realizes that in the current "anti-far left" campaign no one has come up with a single example of "infiltration" involving the Marxist-Leninist Organization of Canada IN STRUGGLE!. On the other hand, no one has failed to include that Organization in the grab bag "far left" which is held to be responsible for all the evils which have befallen the workers' movement lately.

These wilful distortions deserve to be looked at further and compared with the facts.

The "far left" did not create the economic crisis

The workers' movement and the "far left" were not the authors of the crash of 1929 and the Depression of the thirties. Nor have they been the cause of the inflation, plant shutdowns, unemployment, wage controls, and repressive anti-union laws which have been characteristic of the economic and political situation in the past few years. The workers' movement and the "far left" didn't originate regional inequalities, nor the national oppression of the Quebecois or Native peoples or Acadians or other minorities. They were not the ones who adopted the racist laws on immigration and (un)employment.

The workers' movement and the "far left" did not vote in the War Measures Act. Nor were they the ones to hand out injunctions to the employers at the drop of a hat or to pass emergency back-to-work orders. The workers' movement and "far left" didn't wage the "witch hunts" of the fifties, nor did they occupy Quebec militarily in the seventies. It wasn't they who used the pretext of the "October crisis" to destroy what popular organizations existed in Quebec and to attack a number of union leaders by linking them in the public mind (here again we see the same old tactics used by the repressive forces) to various terrorists. It was not the workers' movement or the "far left" which herded the unemployed into "labour camps" in the thirties or who opened fire on the unemployed Trekkers in Regina. It was not the workers' movement or the "far left" who wounded with buckshot more than a dozen strikers at Robin Hood flour mill in 1977....

When capitalism is in crisis, the working class pays for it economical-

ly, sees its democratic rights restricted, and falls victim to violent repression. The capitalist world has provided enough examples of fascist regimes since the thirties that there is no need to belabour the point.

When capitalism is in crisis, the working class bears the brunt. There are two possible attitudes for the workers' movement to take to this: either resistance and struggle, or collaboration and compromises with the capitalists.

The current crisis has stimulated the workers' movement to greater resistance

The victories won by the bourgeoisie, that is the bosses and their State, are also defeats for the workers' movement. That's what happens when the bourgeoisie manages to reduce wages and cut back social service budgets in order to give bigger subsidies to companies. That is the result when the capitalists adopt law after law designed to shackle the workers' movement and to constantly reduce its ability to fight. The workers' movement is the target and the victim. The bourgeoisie is taking advantage of the present crisis to nullify the gains won by the labour movement, such gains as the unionization of whole new categories of workers in the sixties and the victories in the battle for cost of living protection in the early seventies.

In fact, the unions are well on their way towards being integrated into the capitalist State apparatus. They are being reduced to the status of organizations charged with the responsibility for applying the laws laid down by the bourgeois State, which are all drafted for the express purpose of serving the interests of Capital. The State tries to make sure of things by keeping more than one weapon handy in its arsenal. First, there are the occasional grants made to the unions which a significant part of the union bureaucracy lives off. The federal government sent along several million dollars last year to reward the labour centrals for having kept the struggle against the wage controls at such a low level.

Moreover, the State knows very well how to go about paying off those who have served its interests all the while pretending to defend the working class. Those are the people who become deputy ministers, arbitration board chairmen, heads of labour relations boards, members of commissions of inquiry. Some even get to become members of the Senate or Governor-General!

For those who have to remain within the trade-union hierarchy, the State has other rewards available. For example, there were the various

joint committees in the sixties that the union leaders had to drop out of under pressure from their membership. This was followed by still more varied and complex forms of "consultation" and "co-operation", including "tripartite summit meetings", which were more or less public depending on the circumstances. These affairs are occasions for the leaders of the various labour federations to sit side by side with the bosses and cabinet ministers who waste no time in educating them about the enormous difficulties confronting the economy... all because of the Arabs who are selling their oil too high and the Asians who sell their TV's and textile products too low. The most promising among the labour bosses get to become members of the boards of directors of different public corporations without ceasing to be labour hacks the rest of the time. They can have a crack at a position on the board of anything, from the Bank of Canada to the Societe generate de financement with the Place des Arts board in between.

But the entire system of "honest corruption" is not enough to keep the mass of workers quiet. Very well. As the recruiting ads say, it takes big men to do a big job. The police and the army have special sections, which are lavishly provided for, whose job is to get into the big time themselves by becoming full-time trade unionists.

All of this is nothing new. It has been institutionalized in Canada since the Second World War when the State decided to "clean out" any fighting leadership in the unions which stood for working-class interests. They were aided in this work by mobsters imported directly from the U.S.A. The gangsters soon recruited a gang of local thugs, some of whom remain active in Canadian unions in various places, including in Quebec. When things get too blatant, the State is obliged to act or at least to appear to do so. But there are always "friends" close to the gangsters who have friends in the government or opposition capitalist parties. As everybody knows, it always pays to have some "friends in politics" when things start to get a little hot.

The reporters and editorial writers and even those trade unionists who are still a little wet behind the ears might perhaps be excused for not remembering what happened in history, especially if they have spent most of their time around organizations like the JEC (Catholic student youth) and the Canadian Labour Congress. But people like QFL president Louis Laberge, Chartrand, Pilkey, Yetman, and even CNTU vice-president l'Heureux, Gerin-Lajoie, and all the other aging defenders of "trade union democracy" cannot plead ignorance.

Unions have always been political

The deepening of the crisis, which lays bare the insoluble contradictions of capitalism, has stimulated a greater class consciousness in a significant section of the workers' movement. After a quarter of a century's absence, communist ideas are again winning supporters. The rightists scream out in horror: the "far left" is infiltrating the unions; the "far left" snubs its nose at democracy; the "far left" is mixing up trade unionism with politics. Down with the "far left"! Long live the "trade union democracy" of "Dede" Desjardins, Dennis McDermott, Pilkey, Laberge, l'Heureux, Gerin-Lajoie and Co!

One has to really take workers for a bunch of imbeciles to try and pass off nonsense like that. Delegates stood on their feet at the last Montreal Central Council meeting to unanimously adopt a motion of censure of CNTU vice-president Andre l'Heureux. He had flown into a fit worthy of ex-CNTU president and Liberal senator Jean Marchand (l'Heureux seems to suffer from such attacks a lot these days) likening the demonstration of groups of strikers at the PQ's regional congress, including by the way several CNTU members, to fascism. Look who is talking. It is the very same l'Heureux who sabotaged Operation Liberty in the fall of 1978, the coalition which had succeeded in uniting literally dozens of groups to build a unified resistance to rising repression.

Last winter, CLC president Dennis McDermott arrived at the rostrum of the Ontario Federation of Labour convention surrounded by a ring of **bodyguards**. Of course, one must realize that this is the same McDermott who revelled in telling the postal workers where to put it, as the State was in the act of depriving CUPW of its right to strike. This is the same man who had already started up his mammoth campaign in support of the NDP, aided in this project by the millions of dollars which had been received from the Trudeau government several months earlier. When you look at these things and consider the long list of betrayals that preceded them, it is not so hard to understand after all that a labour body president like him would have to go to a union convention under the protection of **bodyguards**, nor that he would be greeted by frequent and widespread choruses of booing. And the "good Christian souls" in our midst should stop acting so bewildered and surprised to see more and more workers refer to characters like l'Heureux and McDermott as "labour bosses": quite simply, they implement the bosses' policies within the unions.

The issue is not whether or not unions should get involved with politics. The problem is that they already are involved — in promoting the politics of the **status quo**. They promote the politics of the

bourgeoisie, of capitalism, rather than the politics of the proletariat — resistance to capitalist exploitation and oppression and the revolutionary struggle for socialism. At the present time, a larger and larger part of the labour movement is rejecting the bourgeois politics of the labour bosses and taking up the working-class politics of resistance and struggle against the capitalists. The essence of the matter is political. That is why it is such a bad joke, indeed it is pure Jesuitic mumbo jumbo, to try to reduce everything down to just the question of how democratic the methods which are being employed in the unions are. That is exactly, however, what all the editorial writers, reporters, and trade-union leaders who cultivate progressive and democratic airs would like to reduce it to. They would have us believe that all viewpoints could be allowed expression in the unions if only the formal processes of democracy existed and the spokesmen didn't use methods of infiltration and manipulation.

Class collaboration: guiding line for the labour bosses

Who do these so-called democratic socialists and progressives want to put their faith in to defend the trade-union democracy which they allege is being threatened by the "far left"? On the labour leaders presently in office, obviously.

The present leadership of the unions, even the less reactionary ones, are completely unable to explain what is going on in the unions because they have never taken the trouble to analyse it. For a lot of them, for those who are the real true labour bosses, the problem doesn't even exist. As far as they are concerned everything is coming up rosebuds when there aren't any bothersome union meetings being held. It is just how they want it when contracts and grievances are resolved (or not resolved) behind the scenes between them and the company. This attitude is very widespread in unions like the Teamsters, the international textile unions and, to varying degrees, in pretty well all of the U.S. unions in Canada, not to mention the outright company unions which are multiplying in numbers. As a matter of fact, this attitude is far and away the dominant one in the union movement in this country.

If you raise this issue with the labour bosses they are likely to reply by expressing their "deep distress" that the workers have absolutely no

interest in going to union meetings any more. Why they don't even care about their contracts these days. Having made their "statement", they will then add that what interests the workers is big cars and skidoos! That little addition has the merit of revealing how "deep" their contempt is for the working class.

However, if and when the members of a given union do in fact work at studying the pros and cons of the proposed contract (and most of the time the union brass leaves its members completely in the dark), and if the workers decide to go to the union meeting (or as often as not to call for one to be held) because they want to ask questions and say what they think, these very same labour bosses start climbing the walls. Sound the alarms! The "far left" is infiltrating! They are destroying that beautiful trade-union unity that we have always imposed, or, maintained. They are manipulating the meetings and turning the workers against the union.

These bureaucrats are buried so deep in the comfortable little niches that they have carved out for themselves, they are in such a hurry to get an agreement that the very fact that workers want a meeting to discuss their contract or tactics for fighting a strike is proof that they are anti-union. It is conclusive evidence that the workers are undemocratic and certainly that they are being manipulated by the "far left". These porkchoppers have completely lost sight of what the interests of workers are. They are serving the interests of the capitalist class instead.

Anyone who has looked even superficially at the history of the Canadian labour movement since the period of McCarthyism in the fifties understands that the role of the labour bosses has been to dampen down any flames of struggle that appeared in the workers' movement. It has been thirty years now that we have been treated to the refrain, every time there is a movement of revolt, that all problems will be settled at the negotiating table, in the judges' antechambers, or in the halls of Parliament. These very same labour bosses have had the nerve to repeat the NDP and the PQ, for twenty and ten years respectively, represent the political solution to all of the workers' problems.

Is it such a surprise that there are so few workers at union meetings? Don't the labour bosses tell them over and over again that they, with a little help from the NDP-PQ are going to solve all those problems for us? Don't they lecture workers tirelessly that there isn't any need for meetings to get people mobilized, let alone a need to go out into the streets to rally broader support? The labour bosses have been serving up a consistent policy of class collaboration and have just as consistently opposed any policy of struggle and resistance. They reap what they sow: a growing distrust and contempt among the workers that they have tried to lead along by the nose.

Who then are the manipulators?

Democracy is very weak in Canadian unions as a whole; in most cases, it is non-existent. That is not because of anything done by the "far left". It is not due to the "natural" disinterest of workers either. It is mainly because most union leaders think like bosses, not workers. They think and dress up like bosses because they spend a lot of their time supping with the owners, personnel directors, high level civil servants, and cabinet ministers in style. Those who live like this are the most cynical among the manipulators of the working class. The example that immediately comes to mind is how the INCO miners on strike at Sudbury are literally being used by the CLC and the Steelworkers brass to advance the electoral chances of the NDP. However, the Steelworkers get a very good press. The editors of the capitalist papers never fail to publish the annual report to the membership by Jean Gerin-Lajoie, Quebec area director of this "international union". It is always lauded as a model of moderate progressivism which is "reassuringly democratic".

Jean Gerin-Lajoie is certainly a fine specimen of a democrat. His democracy consists mainly of opposing any movement which develops in opposition to his leadership and ideology by any means necessary, from the circulation of little letters to the outright dissolution of local leaderships he doesn't like. For one thing is sure; Mr. Gerin-Lajoie is not neutral.

Gerin-Lajoie is a fervent supporter of international unions, a good deal more fervent than the miners at Rouyn-Noranda. These workers have been trying for several months now to get rid of the international despite the intervention of good friend Theo Gagne whose reign as the workers' "link to the company" recently came to an end.

Gerin-Lajoie is also an avowed PQer who got the Quebec Steelworkers to adopt his views last year without the slightest debate. He is a member of the provincial labour federation (QFL) leadership where he has over the years built up around him a bit of a "mafia" who concern themselves with various hustles. One of these, of course, is the providing of "honest election workers" to the party that makes giving the help most worthwhile.

But aren't the Steelworkers despite all that a very democratic union? Don't they say right in their **Constitution** that communists are banned from conducting any activity within their ranks? After all, the Steelworkers leadership, which is in the United States, is elected on the basis of having the candidates' photos very democratically and prominently displayed in the union press for the membership to study. Why certainly Steel is democratic. They check off part of their

members' pay every month to bankroll, via the CLC, the NDP. Everyone knows that all Steelworkers in Quebec and Canada are ardent supporters of the NDP. Steel is evidently democratic and keeps its nose well out of any kind of nasty politics since it also provides money, through the AFL-CIO, to the Democratic Party in the United States. This party is another organization that all Steelworkers across Canada back with enthusiasm as everybody knows. Steel's democratic nature shines through again when you look at all the investments that it makes in the big monopolies that live off the sweat of other trade unionists. There again is a policy which has the massive and enthusiastic support of the whole membership who were all inspired by the facts presented to them at the (non-existent) big democratic meetings where this was put up for open debate.

Is that the kind of "democracy" and "political neutrality" that the "good Christian souls" at the labour federation headquarters and in the capitalist press would like to have the working class swallow. "Ah well", say these fine gentlemen, "we knew" all along, didn't we, that democracy was sometimes mangled a little bit in these 'American unions'. But things are different here in Canada and Quebec. And anyway, Jean Gerin-Lajoie is not McDermott and he is certainly not as bad as George Meany...."

Well, it is true that the mafia always has its "front men". The union mafia is no exception. But then again Gerin-Lajoie is no exception either and the Steelworkers are absolutely typical.

"Maybe so, but at the CNTU, things are much more open and above board" protest our tarnished "democrats". Sorry to disappoint again gentlemen, but things are not really all that above board in the CNTU either. What process of democratic consultation did Andre L'Heureux go through when he decided to sabotage the Operation Liberty coalition in the fall of 1978? Upon what authority and following what democratic debates did the leaders of the Montreal Central Labour Council act in getting the 1978 convention to vote for its position of "independence and socialism"? What democratic debates were held by this same leadership to get authorization to organize trips to the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe? This has been done at the instigation of the Communist Party of Quebec who have been assiduously courting the CNTU leadership for many years now. When and where were the discussions held with the membership that led to the support of Cuba, the same Cuba which sends thousands of its soldiers to fight as mercenaries in Africa? What kind of debate was there prior to the decision to back Vietnam in the conflicts this country is having with Kampuchea and China where Vietnam is being turned into an instrument of Soviet penetration in Southeast Asia?

Who was consulted and what authority was granted to the Montreal

Labour Council when it decided not to go demonstrate against the Wage Control Act in March 1977, justifying its decision with the clumsy excuse that Ottawa was in a "foreign country"? The Wage Control Act was foreign all right, foreign to the class interests of the workers of Quebec!

One would have to be completely ignorant of the facts of the situation or incorrigibly closed-minded to argue that the "far left" introduced political questions into the unions or that it brought in undemocratic practices that had hitherto been unknown. In fact, the present union leaders are extremely political and totally devoted to defending the political **status quo**. Some labour bosses do it openly, like McDermott in his support for the NDP or Laberge with his plugs for the PQ. Others are more subtle in discreetly promoting parties that seem to be working class in nature but are in fact thoroughly bourgeois like the Canadian CP and the CPQ. The fact is that undemocratic practices are clearly entrenched in most Quebec and Canadian unions.

That is where you should look if you really want to find the source of the workers' disinterest a lot of the time in their union and in the labour federation to which they are affiliated. Yet again, anyone who takes the trouble to analyse the situation in the unions today will quickly perceive that the weak level of participation didn't start with the development of the "far left".

When the far right is found to be part of the "far left"...

The workers' movement has been in a turmoil for the past few years. The economic conditions of workers have degenerated. Democratic rights, especially as applies to unions, have been chopped away at from all angles. It is getting clearer and clearer that the so-called solutions advanced by the labour bosses and their equivalents in the NDP and PQ are, if not outright for the capitalists, at least objectively ones that result in greater exploitation and repression of workers.

In a situation such as this, it is not altogether surprising that the specialists in fishing in troubled waters should be lying in wait for every outbreak of working-class revolt in order to try to dangle their bait. These people are at best leeches on the workers' movement. The worst

of them are downright counter-revolutionaries whose practice is barely distinguishable from that of the fascists. Within the ranks of what the editorialists conveniently lump together as the "far left", there are a goodly number of enemies of the working class: the Khrushchev-style revisionists of the Canadian CP and its Quebec branch (the CPQ), the various Trotskyist sects, and the so-called Marxist-Leninists in the CPC(M-L) and the Canadian Communist League, and various other less developed groups.

The Canadian CP and its Quebec branch, conveniently created at the end of the sixties, have had nothing communist about them for a long time. In fact, one can date it back to the time when the CP made itself into the open ally of the MacKenzie-King Liberals against the Conservatives, during the Second World War. Today this store front for Soviet social-imperialism is just a dime store, and a joke shop at that. Their revolutionary programme? To nationalize the U.S. monopolies. The Liberal Party seems to have got the message and is busily applying at least in part the "communist" programme of Kashtan by setting up all those State-owned crown corporations, the latest of which is Petro-Canada.

As for the Trotskyists, one or another of the 57 varieties have been active in the Canadian workers' movement since the beginning of the sixties. Their tactic is always the same no matter what "tendency" is applying it: to create factions or caucuses in unions, organizations, and political parties. The purpose in each case is to enable them to "inject" their ideas into the mass organizations in order to promote division, defeatism, and demobilization. In English Canada, they support the NDP. In Quebec, they call for the formation by the labour centrals of a workers' party which will accomplish Quebec independence in order to achieve the unity of all workers in Canada and North America! The Trotskyists are inveterate opportunists who go with the prevailing wind as long as it is the kind of wind that makes it look like they are going to the left.

The CPC(M-L) (which incidentally is running candidates in the federal elections under the name of the "Marxist-Leninist Party of Canada") is nothing but a gang of agent-provocateurs. It was created in 1970, or so they claimed at the time, to fight revisionism and disseminate "Mao Zedong Thought". For over a year now this same organization has decided to relegate Mao Zedong to the status of one of the worst revisionists in history! The CPC(M-L), which has a very murky and dubious past, is above all distinguished by its propensity to play the 2 by 4 game (with sticks made out of two inch by four inch lumber) in demonstrations, union meetings, rallies in support of the Vietnamese people against U.S. imperialism, or last year's meetings organized by IN STRUGGLE! in support of Quebec's right to self-

determination. Those are but some of the facts that vindicate those who consider this group to be a clique of paid agents whose sole raison d'etre is to sabotage the work of working-class organizations and the struggle for a genuine communist party in Canada. That is why it has lost all credibility in the eyes of the Canadian people everywhere. The members that it still has in the unions have become "yesmen" to the labour bosses. These "yesmen" work in total anonymity, except when they put on yet another hat and organize meetings where draped in red they scream vociferously, in the buggy-eyed born again style for which they have become infamous, their devotion to Marxism-Leninism in order to discredit the ideology of the revolutionary proletariat.

Opportunism and terrorist methods don't die easily. Just as CPC(M-L) has gone into decline, up pops the Communist League to take its place. They employ the same extreme language coupled with the hypocritical veneration of Mao Zedong designed to try to profit from Mao's prestige. The League has taken up the task of destroying IN STRUGGLE! by slander, lies, terrorism, physical attacks, and collaboration with, who else, the police. Rather interesting activities for a group of people who operate under the label of "communist".

As quickly as the CPC(M-L) has thrown Mao Zedong and the Chinese party overboard in favour of a new Halloween mask, the League has leapt into the breach: everything that comes out of the China of the revisionist Deng is hailed as the latest historic "development" of Marxism-Leninism. The present leaders of China are carrying out a capitalist policy within their country — the politics of Coca-Cola, Catholic universities, widening wage gaps, welcoming of private investment from the imperialist countries etc. They are applying a pro-imperialist and counter-revolutionary policy on an international scale. Thus the League is playing the same game, in relation to the Chinese revisionists, than the Canadian and Quebec CP play with the Soviet Union. The CP continues to pretend that the U.S.S.R. is a socialist country while in fact it is a social-fascist and social-imperialist one which, like all imperialists, seeks only to make the rest of the world into its fiefdom.

The trade-union leaders and editorial writers pretend to be well-informed, having taken it upon themselves to become the sources of information for workers and the public in general. That people with as ready access to the facts should continue to lump together IN STRUGGLE! with the saboteurs we have mentioned above can hardly be an accident or an oversight. It serves a clearcut purpose: to discredit the communists by mixing them up with agent provocateurs and saboteurs. After six years of struggle on many different fronts, the M L O C IN STRUGGLE! is today the only genuinely communist organization in Canada, an affirmation which stands up when you look at the facts.

IN STRUGGLE! has nothing in common with the "far left" created by the editorial hacks

The editorial writers and labour leaders are not content to just confuse communists with the far right. They also are obliged to distort the meaning of democracy in the unions, reducing it to what can be made to appear democratic. There is more democracy in the censure of the CNTU's Andre l'Heureux by the Montreal Labour Council convention and in the boeing of Dennis McDermott at the Ontario Federation of Labour convention than there is in the railroading of all the reports and motions at the same meetings. Most of the delegates to those conventions don't even have the time to read the documents they have to vote on prior to the convention. There is even less time available to present the material to their fellow workers so that they can study and discuss it. Half the time they don't even receive the pertinent documents until after they have arrived at the convention!

Trade-union democracy is alive and kicking. It lives in the growing movement of workers everywhere to resist the systematic manipulation of which they are all too-often the objects. It is alive among the workers at CN-CP who are obliged to raise Cain to get meetings called where they can discuss the proposed contract, and who are exposing and condemning the practice of mail balloting. It is alive among the workers in the public service who are demanding the creation of union structures which the membership can really use to get informed and get organized. It exists wherever workers have had enough of negotiations carried on behind their backs in cahoots with the employer, who are fed up with always fighting losing battles because the union bosses would rather spend their time in the company of arbitrators, judges and cabinet ministers than in building up the spirit of solidarity, mobilization, and fighting unity among workers engaged in struggles and in the working class as a whole.

Trade-union democracy is alive and well in all those places where workers are telling the corrupt "labour bosses", who function as nothing less than the agents of the capitalists in the workers' movement, where to get off. That is the democracy which the Marxist-Leninist Organization of Canada IN STRUGGLE! has always supported and will continue to support with all its might by means of agitation and propaganda.

The MLOC IN STRUGGLED objectives are well known. They

have not changed since the creation of the l'Equipe du journal (the collective publishing our newspaper) in the fall of 1972: to build the party of the proletariat which will lead the working people of Canada in the struggle for socialism. IN STRUGGLE! has resolved firmly since 1974 that this struggle must be waged on a Canada-wide level. At our last (spring 1979) Congress, we reaffirmed that in order to accomplish this, unity would have to be built on the basis of the recognition of the absolute equality of languages and nations existing on the Canadian territory.

IN STRUGGLE!'s tactics and methods are just as well known as its objectives: they are to serve the long term and immediate interests of the masses by supporting their immediate demands and to try to draw out, within the framework of those struggles, the necessity to make a revolution to put an end to the chronic economic crises, to unemployment, inflation, poverty, limitations on the exercise of democratic rights, repression, wars, and fascism — to put an end once and for all to all forms of exploitation and oppression.

The MLOC IN STRUGGLE! is very much against the contemptuous attitudes of the union bosses towards workers. We fight with all the energy at our disposal against manipulation in any form, whether it emanates from the offices of the union bosses or is carried out by the so-called "far left". But at the same time, we respect the decisions which workers have arrived at democratically. That is why one of the most important fronts of struggle in the unions today is precisely the battle to democratize them. Part of that battle, an aspect of democratization, is Canadianization. All of the unions which are run from the United States are essentially reactionary organizations over which the membership in Canada is able to have absolutely no control whatsoever.

To the capitalist politics of the labour bosses, IN STRUGGLE! counterposes the politics of the proletariat

To mix up IN STRUGGLE's activities with infiltration, sabotage, or even to the work done by the police is a sign of appalling ignorance of the facts or plain dishonesty. It is pure hypocrisy to grab onto and use the undemocratic methods of groups that are communist in name only — methods, by the way, which are **identical** to those employed by the labour bosses — in order to come out against the activities con-

ducted by communists in the workers' movement. It is the kind of Bar-num and Bailey demagoguery that is employed only by those who, consciously or unconsciously, are working for the powers-that-be.

As we have seen, unions are far from being politically neutral. Although many would like to reduce everything to the question of undemocratic methods, the issue is the overall nature of the politics being promoted by the unions. The labour bosses have nothing to learn from anybody when it comes to undemocratic methods. But those who defend the labour bosses don't do so because of their methods but because of their politics, the politics of class collaboration — capitalist politics.

IN STRUGGLE! started sounding the alarm in the workers' movement of the imminence of State control of wages in the spring of 1975, pointing out that the companies needed such a measure to maintain and even increase their profit margins. The controls came in that autumn and IN STRUGGLE! took up a campaign of denouncing this law which had become a major tool for intimidation and blackmail in the hands of the State. As might be expected, the union bosses did everything they could to avoid any confrontation between the workers' movement and the State over this crucial issue. After the March 1976 demonstration and the October 1976 General Strike, which the labour leaders worked overtime to keep on a small scale and to confine within the narrowest bounds possible, the line of appealing to the courts and holding "tripartite" meetings with the government and the bosses won out completely. The so-called Communist League subscribed in practice to this shift because, as they put it, "the guys in the shop just aren't interested".

Well, the bourgeoisie was very interested. The class interests of workers were on the line. Once the workers were sent home from the strike to watch the new tactics in action on TV, Morris and McDermott got to work spending most of their time hanging around the Supreme Court and waiting obediently outside the door of the federal labour minister. Trudeau was quick to send them packing once the heat was off, although he was judicious enough to throw a few million dollars their way in payment for service well done. During this period, there was a tidal wave of repressive laws adopted. The immigrants, unemployed workers, and people on social assistance were the first to feel its effects. After them came the public sector workers, symbolized especially by the treatment meted out to the postal workers. And it wasn't just posties who were slammed, but public service workers of all sorts who were targetted by different provincial and federal laws. And that is only the beginning. The governments at various levels have clearly indicated that the reductions in the size of the wage increase permitted in the public sector will create favourable grounds for doing the same thing in the private sector.

Here again, the M L O C IN STRUGGLE! has played a leading role in defending the interests of the working class. It took the initiative to show how the Wage Control Act, which rendered any legal strike action ineffective and pointless, created a situation where new repressive measures could be more easily implemented. IN STRUGGLE! dedicated its energies to mobilizing the working class to resist capitalist repression.

Here again, the timing was all wrong for the labour bosses. Operation Liberty spread all across the country largely due to the efforts of our Organization. The labour centrals promptly found in Andre L'Heureux of the CNTU the prime architect of their politics of class collaboration. Once again the League found itself on the same side as the labour bosses. As far as these people are concerned, workers have more important irons in the fire than the fight to defend their democratic rights, the fight to retain or achieve complete freedom of action for the unions.

In need of an alibi to justify their actions, some turn to the federal elections while others swear by the PQ's referendum. This leads to the spectacle of the CLC rediscovering its militancy in 1979 to lead the troops into battle against the Wage Control Act three years too late by calling upon people to support the NDP! Make no mistake about it, any government which would perpetrate a travesty of justice like that deserves to be "militantly" turned out on its ear. As for the Quebec labour centrals, the best cover up they could come up with for their sabotage of the Operation Liberty coalition was the addition of a few "democratic" slogans to be chanted on May Day.

That is what adopting the politics of the bourgeoisie, politics which are contrary to those of the working class, leads to. The millions of dollars taken out of workers' pockets by the CLC for investment in the NDP is a simple waste of money. For one thing, the NDP will not be taking power for the foreseeable future. Furthermore, even if they did, they would apply the very same policy as the Liberals and Conservatives do now. Their performance on the provincial level in applying the Wage Control Act is conclusive proof of that. The hopes that others have placed in the PQ, which have already been dashed to the ground many times, fall into the same category.

They tell us that communists sow confusion in the unions because they mix trade unionism with politics. Well, fine sirs, the facts are in direct opposition to your fine blown accusations. The communists have not introduced politics into the unions: they are fighting the bourgeois politics of the labour bosses. They are defending the politics of the proletariat. And that is what provokes moaning and gnashing of teeth among your editorial writers, whose sermons about democracy and outlandish doubletalk designed to confuse communists with oppor-

tunists, counter-revolutionaries and even the police, in the final analysis will only succeed in fooling those who want to be fooled.

Charles Gagnon
Montreal, May 2, 1979

APPENDIX

Infiltration effort fails

**Editorial in the Montreal newspaper, Le Devoir,
April 24, 1979**

The most important of the labour councils in the C N T U very nearly fell into the clutches of the so-called Marxist-Leninists. Should that have taken place, it would have marked a serious break from the principle, which lies at the basis of everything that the C N T U stands for, of the autonomy of the trade-union movement with respect to political parties and organizations. But the problems in the Montreal Labour Council are far from being resolved. The truth is that the "victory", sweet as it was, was only made possible by the divisions which existed among the radicals themselves, some of whom preferred to see the centre win out to a breakthrough by the far left.

One group has been defeated, but neither it nor its rivals in infiltration and manipulation within the leading bodies of the union movement have been disarmed. Following those who are in league with one group, there will be others ready to struggle with another. The penetration is already so advanced that even those who are elected to office find it difficult to exercise their mandate. This is inevitable and will remain so as long as the membership — the "rank and file", the infamous "masses" — are no longer able to control their own unions. It will remain true if they leave the responsibilities of leadership and representation to the professional activists and fail to expose and move firmly to defeat the clandestine campaigns of infiltration into their union and popular organizations.

In short, the process of straightening things out again in the unions is neither finished nor assured. The work, taken up at the Labour Council, has only begun.

* * *

The labour movement gets worried and upset, and with good reason, when the police infiltrate the unions and conduct clandestine operations even at the price of undermining trade unionism. It is much less sensitive to the infiltration by political militants whose slogans, mandate, and allegiance are not something shared with the members who elect them but derive from the semi-clandestine groups to which they belong. There is still a considerable amount of confusion on this point. It per-

sists with the dangerous rationale that the workers' movement was always the natural "home" of the parties of the left and that trade-union democracy cannot permit "witch hunts". This Pollyanna purism and naivete will be paid for dearly later, if indeed there is a later.

It is one thing for the unions and trade unionists to, on their own initiative, take positions and come out for one political option or the other, no matter how radical, which is in line with the tradition of freedom in the genuine labour federations. But it is quite something else again to permit the phoney radicalization which is both superficial and suicidal, as a result of the manipulations that certain political agents manage to carry off where they do their dirty work. These two trends are not only different they are often contradictory. The strong unions repulse the intruders; the weak succumb to their infection and their poison. The first leads to political progress for the workers; the other, to disturbances and to paralysis in the unions.

The Devil has no scruples. Moreover, police States have often borrowed the path of radicalism in order to sabotage many a popular or working-class movement before it gained too much strength.

These infiltrations and manipulative practices confront us with a problem which we have never had to deal with before. The trade-union movement especially has been and remains wide open and democratic. It has confidence in its new members and those who have just arrived on the scene, not always thinking to verify their credentials in meetings and public actions. This tradition of liberalism and openness is starting to backfire on some of the centrals. This is especially true for those organizations which are vulnerable to the speech-making and tactics practised by those who specialize in "entrism". It will be all the harder for them to come to grips with the problem and find some solutions as long as it is by and large forbidden to pose the problem openly. The moment that their game has been discovered and attacked, the manipulators are quick to take on the mantle of victims.

That is how the semi-clandestine groups have paralysed, indeed gutted, a large number of popular daycare centres and small food co-ops. They have planted their people in many trade-union bodies. They have played a major role in conflicts which became irresolvable. Everywhere their revolutionary verbiage turns off many from both unionism and political involvement. Many of these militants are devoted. They have an intellectual coherence that others often lack and they are there when the heat is on. This gives them the benefit of a great deal of tolerance and leeway if not immunity. Others of these militants, who are less in-offensive, have resorted to the tactics of intimidation which bring to mind strangely enough some of the "disruptive tactics" employed by the police.

No matter which way they act, the moment has come to judge their

practice by its consequences — which all too often are division, demobilization, paralysis, and discouragement.

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It wouldn't be quite accurate to simply identify the problems posed by these groups with the "disruptive tactics" employed by the police and the army's special forces. The security services do not discriminate: they buy their information and they plant their agents in all groups and at all levels no matter what tendency it is. And increasingly people are beginning to see that it is more than just coincidence that these groups, that normally you would expect to be taking on rather different "enemies" of the working class, are fighting so hard against the trade-union "bureaucracy" and the "bourgeois" PQ government. Certainly the Parti Quebecois and the labour centrals deserve to get a good political and union spanking on a regular basis. But isn't it a little bit suspect that they have been done the honour of being made number one priority?

Up to now the havoc caused by these groups, at least that which is traceable, has been fairly limited even though not insignificant. Many of their militants moreover have broken with the fanatical and suicidal type of actions. Nevertheless, the quite considerable means which remain in the hands of others will continue to pose a serious threat to trade-union democracy. If these political militants do not change their methods and orientation then the centrals and their local affiliates should be taking internal security measures which may be disagreeable but have become necessary.

Jean-Claude Leclerc