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Clinton/Dole: What Is to Be Done?

by Evelyn Kaye

Every campaign statement by Clinton and Dole reeks of hypocrisy. They spout phrases about democracy, justice, equal opportunity and a secure future for our children. Meanwhile they are really debating who will lead the world bourgeoisie and the most powerful imperialism in history. The real program they stand for is exploitation, racism and poverty at home and abroad. Their conflict is only over who can best fool people into letting capitalism and its attacks continue.

This is what revolutionaries say. But not only revolutionaries see through the politicians' hypocrisy. There is a rising tide of anger in the U.S. today. Most eligible voters won't vote. Among those who will, most now favor Clinton. Not because people like him — they know he's a liar, a sneak and even worse. His strength lies in the fact that he's not Dole, Gingrich & Co.

The simmering hostility is directed not only against the politicians but also against their masters, the big corporations and the rich. However, the anger is frustrated; there is no visible alternative. If there were a strong revolutionary party, not only the election but the whole face of America would look very different.

Revolutionaries do the opposite of what the bourgeois candidates do: we say what is. Politically advanced workers and youth are already drawing revolutionary conclusions and want to destroy the system. Our main message is that we need to join together to build the international revolutionary party and fight for socialist revolution.

To this end, during the capitalist elections revolutionaries must pursue three central tasks:

1) Draw the class line and urge our fellow workers to refuse to vote for any bourgeois candidate. Not only do both capitalist parties already have programs for attacking the

working class; what they do in power will be much worse — especially if they are elected with large working-class support.

2) Show that the attacks by the bosses and politicians are not due solely to evil policies or greed but, more fundament-



Atlanta demonstrator in Clinton mask steps on students protesting administration's cuts.

ally, to the operation of the capitalist system. Reformism, the ideology of the present working-class leadership, which says the capitalists can be persuaded to do good things for working people, is a deadly deception. Only working-class
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COFI and LRP Report

LUTTE OUVRIERE FETE

LRP comrades visited Europe this spring for political work in Germany and France. For over 25 years, the French "Trotskyist" organization Lutte Ouvrière (LO) has held a Fête in a village outside Paris. In the context of a family-oriented left-wing state fair, LO provides stands for left groups from around the world to sell literature and hold forums. This year the number of groups attending was down, following the trend of the past few years — and despite the massive strike movement in France last December.

LO claims credit for breaking through the sectarianism of the French Communist Party (PCF) during the movement and winning the ear of a large layer of worker-militants. But as we pointed out in *PR 51*, LO emulated the PCF's reformist politics, only fighting harder and more militantly. At the Fête, LO defended the program it has raised since December: offering to vote for the PCF in the first round of the next elections instead of running their own candidates — if the PCF would adopt LO's reformist "emergency plan" of its election campaign, in which Arlette Laguiller won a surprising 5 percent of the vote. Although everyone expects another mass working class upsurge, LO is focusing more on electoralism than a strategy for mass action.

For the twelfth year in a row the LRP staffed a booth at the Fête. We also held a forum titled "Labor Party in the U.S.: Trap for the Working Class," a subject familiar to *PR* readers. (See the article on page 21.) Interestingly, the audience of mostly English speakers did not disagree much

with the LRP's position that the labor party sponsored by Labor Party Advocates was a dead end for workers.

Sales of our publications and discussions with independents and members of groups from Spain, Iran, Britain, Germany, France, Canada, Bolivia, Argentina and Haiti indicated a greater receptivity to our politics than before, particularly on our view of Stalinism as statified capitalism, as well as on Black liberation, the Labor Party question in the U.S. and the Socialist Labour Party in Britain.

CHICAGO LRP

This spring the Chicago group intensified its presence on the campuses of working-class schools. As a result we are building a small periphery of high school and college youth interested in revolutionary politics.

Through these efforts, the LRP was invited to address ChiMexla, a Latino youth organization at Northeastern Illinois University. The LRP speaker presented a Marxist analysis of the world crisis and explained why decaying capitalism demands lower wages, higher unemployment, greater racism, more cop brutality and more attacks on immigrants. He further showed why it is necessary to fight for a revolutionary party even in the narrowest defensive battles.

The talk was well attended and a discussion ensued, ranging from NAFTA to the question of national self-determination. One key issue was proletarian vs. national-centered organization and leadership. LRPers explained that while communists defend the right of oppressed minorities to organize themselves, national organization is not enough. The central strategic task of socialist revolution requires an interracialist and internationalist working-class vanguard.

This spring we also conducted an extensive class series on the Russian question. Readers in the Chicago area should contact us at (312)-463-1340 to find out about upcoming forums and events.

LEFT BURIES STALEY LESSONS

In the past few months the Chicago LRP intervened at a number of meetings held by various leftists and unionists in the Labor Party Advocates milieu in order to actively counter the building of this new reformist trap.

In June we attended a Lessons of the War Zone meeting in Decatur, Illinois sponsored by the Socialist Organizer group. Mike Griffin, a former Staley striker who became a paid organizer for Labor Party Advocates, gave a talk notable for its contradictions. At one point he argued for a general strike; at another he defended the "corporate campaign" tactic designed by the bureaucrats to pacify militancy and erode the potential for mass action, and which had actually destroyed the Staley struggle! *continued on page 32*

Proletarian Revolution

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Russian Election: Yeltsin, Zyuganov Both Serve Capital

by Jeff Covington

In the aftermath of Russian President Boris Yeltsin's reelection victory in the July 3 run-off against "Communist" opponent Gennady Zyuganov, much remains uncertain about the course Russian politics will take in the coming years. But this much is clear: Yeltsin's regime and his loyal opposition, the Communist Party of the Russian Federation (KPRF in Russian), will work together to enforce the political "stability" that capitalism demands of its servants in government.

Already within days after the election, evidence of this collaboration was forthcoming from both camps. The Communists, who have effective control of Russia's parliament, indicated they would not block the re-appointment of Yeltsin's right-hand man Viktor Chernomyrdin as Prime Minister. And Chernomyrdin, whose task it is to form and lead a new government, in turn indicated there will be places for individual KPRF ministers in it. Yeltsin himself was preaching "reconciliation" in his victory speech.

This is not to say capitalists in Russia or worldwide were indifferent to the result of the election, nor that Yeltsin's victory was achieved without resorting to the most blatantly corrupt and coercive shenanigans that the rich inventory of bourgeois electoral manipulation tactics has to offer.

To be sure, Yeltsin was the overwhelming preference of Western imperialism and of Russia's tiny layer of super-rich capitalists who have made obscene profits from the "free market reforms" Yeltsin has carried out — and corruptly at that — in recent years. The audacity of the anti-worker attacks knows no bounds: a few years ago capital demanded price liberalization and other market measures that decimated Russian workers' living standards through hyperinflation; now austerity plans are imposed on the working class as ... an anti-inflationary measure. Getting rubles into the "right" hands before preserving their value is a necessity for efficient exploitation; such is the beauty of capitalist logic.

For these policies, for the massive decline in Russian industrial production (down 55 percent since 1989), for the ruthless war in Chechnya (50,000-60,000 killed, mainly civilians) and much more, Yeltsin became widely hated in Russia. His approval ratings hovered in the single digits all of last year; the Czar probably would have polled better in 1916.

IN YELTSIN'S POCKET: THE RUSSIAN MEDIA ...

Yeltsin's comeback was first and foremost the result of complete government control of the major mass media. Not only did the official state television station become, unsurprisingly, a veritable round-the-clock Yeltsin campaign advertisement; but no less than Igor Malashenko, president of the rival "independent" station which had often been harshly critical of Yeltsin in the past on matters like the invasion of Chechnya, openly joined Yeltsin's campaign team!

The press was no better. As the Prague-based Open Media Research Institute (OMRI) reported about Moskovsky Komsomolets, the biggest daily paper in Moscow:

Its election coverage has consisted almost exclusively of pro-Yeltsin material, including banner headlines on the days leading up to 16 June that read "We are all voting for Yeltsin." [Columnist Aleksandr] Minkin claimed that

one editor told him, "Write whatever you want, just don't touch Yeltsin," which Minkin compared to telling a person to "breathe whatever you want, just not the air."

Further, the June 29 *Washington Post* quoted former journalist Gleb Pavlovsky's estimate that in Moscow alone, 1000 journalists were receiving bribes in return for pro-



It's not just the Russian economy that's sick. Yeltsin asserts health by dancing at rock concert.

Yeltsin articles, "including an elite group of perhaps 50 big-name reporters who received \$3000 to \$5000 per month on top of their other income for writing articles favorable to Yeltsin or other candidates."

... AND FOR NOW, GENERAL LEBED

One such "other candidate" himself turned out to be in Yeltsin's pocket too. Nationalist General Aleksandr Lebed, a would-be Bonapartist and open admirer of Pinochet, got a sudden boost of money and TV exposure in the final weeks before the first round of the election, in which he finished a surprisingly strong third. A day later he accepted a potentially powerful and influential national security post in Yeltsin's administration. Between rounds Yeltsin talked of Lebed as a possible successor in the year 2000.

The working class must understand the danger Lebed represents. He is a veteran of the Afghanistan war and Russia's violently repressive interventions in the Caucasus in 1988-90. During this year's campaign, he advocated martial law, under which any sign of possible armed conflict would be "eliminated" and the most minor offenses would be met with jail sentences. "Perhaps the law is bad, but it will be

complied with," he said after allying with Yeltsin.

Lebed posed as a critic of Yeltsin's policy in Chechnya for the past year and a half, saying he opposed the war and calling for a referendum on Chechen independence. But in April he urged Yeltsin to "push on for the military victory"!

Though Lebed does not burden himself with the fascist trappings of a Zhirinovskiy, the anti-Semitic side of his Russian chauvinism rears its ugly head often enough. A week before the run-off election at a meeting with supporters in Moscow, he interrupted a Cossack who was speaking apologetically and snapped, "You say you are a Cossack. Why do you speak like a Jew?" (*New York Times*, June 28.)

Yeltsin also exploited his power of incumbency by making a series of cynical campaign promises he won't keep long past the election, if at all. For example, at the Moscow meeting in late May that produced the much-publicized cease-fire agreement between Russia and Chechen rebels, Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin told the Chechens, "Just sign it. What's the difference?"

Nevertheless, despite all of Yeltsin's machinations, Zyuganov's "Communists" with their Stalinist roots (shared, it is true, by Yeltsin and his cronies) have themselves to blame for one weapon in the government's propaganda arsenal: fear of a return to Stalinist repression. The capitalist media salivate at this "anti-Communism" and lump everyone

from Lenin to the 1991 coup plotters into the same category.

As revolutionary Marxists, Trotskyists, we denounce the slanders against the leaders of the October Revolution and the desperate measures they were forced to take under conditions of economic ruin, isolation, and Western intervention and blockade during the Russian Civil War. We also know that these very conditions paved the way for the ascension of the counterrevolutionary repressive regimes of every Soviet leader from Stalin onward. Today, however, Zyuganov poses a different kind of danger for Russian workers.

ZYUGANOV'S ACCOMMODATION TO CAPITAL

Zyuganov intended and still intends to subdue Russian workers not with the heavy-handed Stalinism of old but with bourgeois capitalism in a left populist disguise. Despite his Communist label and the vague rhetoric of economic justice, nationalization and anti-privatization that filled his campaign speeches, he offered no alternative to suffering Russian workers and no opposition to capitalism. "We are ready to guarantee American investments and to create better conditions for them than now exist," he wrote for a Western audience in February. He compared his economic policy to the New Deal and his party to the French Socialists. And he understands well the diversionary role such forces play for the ruling class.

At a press briefing in Moscow before last December's parliamentary elections, he explained to anxious Westerners:

The leftward movement of moods in Russia is now evident, and no one will be able to stop this process. Having swung at first sharply to the right, the political pendulum is now moving to the left side. It will be to everyone's benefit if there come to power in Russia not radically inclined lefts, but reasonable and moderate left forces. (*Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, Nov. 29.)

More recently, thirteen of Russia's most powerful bankers and businessmen caused a stir in late April by calling for replacing the election with a "political compromise" between Yeltsin and Zyuganov in the form of either a coalition government including both candidates or an emergency state council of all major parties to govern for two to five years. Zyuganov is certainly no stranger to such deals: last summer he helped the Government survive a no-confidence vote in Parliament despite his party's formal opposition by convincing the allied Agrarian Party to support Yeltsin. "You have to vote to support the Government because I have to vote against it," he told them. (*New York Times*, Nov. 8.)

The appeal of the 13 capitalists was not accepted, but it showed clearly that they consider Zyuganov and his party as part of the ruling class, fully compatible with the prevailing economic regime. The point of the ominous statement, with its allusions to the "resources" Russian big business has to deal with "uncompromising" politicians, was to pressure Zyuganov not to stray from his accommodationist stance.

Indeed, Zyuganov promptly met with bankers to reassure them. He has since made his defense of capital more explicit than ever. At a conference of opposition leaders on May 20, he promised that a Communist Party government "would not touch private wealth"! (*Workers World*, May 30.)

CRISIS OF CAPITALISM DEMANDS A HARD LINE

With such a willing safety valve for mass discontent at its disposal, some have wondered why the West pulled out all the stops to prop up Yeltsin and get him re-elected. Daniel Singer wrote in the April 1, 1996 *Nation*:

THE LIFE AND DEATH OF STALINISM

A Resurrection of Marxist Theory by Walter Daum

The Marxist analysis of Stalinism that makes today's events understandable and shows the working-class way forward.

A thoughtful, and indeed in many ways, an ideologically exciting book. Whether you accept its main thesis or not, and . . . this reviewer does not, it will still challenge your presuppositions and force you to rethink your ideas from top to bottom in the most rigorous way. And unlike most would-be Marxist texts these days, it is written in intelligible English, which is no small gain as well. *Al Richardson, Revolutionary History*

The analysis of Stalinism as a "deformed capitalist state" made by Walter Daum is very persuasive. The idea that it was a particular form of state capitalism because of its origins in a defeated workers revolution has much to commend it. . . . Read this book by all means. . . . But heed our "health warning." His aim . . . is not to give Trotskyism a decent burial: on the contrary, he wants to revive the corpse and give it a facelift.

Communist Review

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It is also difficult to see why an American President would prefer a so-called reformer presiding over a Russia torn apart, and hence explosive, over an alleged "Communist" who, with greater protectionism and state control, promises a slower road to capitalism.

Part of the reason is the blind confidence of the free-market disciples of Western imperialism and their partners in the Russian comprador bourgeoisie. They are more removed from face-to-face relations with the working class than are the industrial managers now in Zyuganov's camp. The latter, as we pointed out in 1993, are "in closer touch with workers" and see "the outrage that could trigger a proletarian explosion." (PR 45.)

But there's much more to it than that. The international bourgeoisie knows that the inefficiencies of protectionism and state control already brought down Stalinism as a prop in the world economic system — capitalism in crisis demands deeper and deeper attacks against the working class and is less and less able to afford slower roads and half-measures. Fundamentally there is no resolution to the contradictions within the capitalist system, but the immediate interests of imperialism drive it to maximize profit rates and step up exploitation worldwide at all costs. Hence the all-out support for Yeltsin.

WEST AIDED YELTSIN

Witness the IMF's unprecedentedly generous \$10.1 billion loan to Russia in February and the "Paris Club"'s lenient terms for repayment of Russia's foreign debt, re-scheduled in April. Both were designed to provide Yeltsin's government with large sums of money up front. After miners and schoolteachers who were unpaid for months went on nationwide strikes in January and February, Yeltsin's Western backers saw the need to allow him to meet the minimal demand of paying back wages, and to use limited spending to calm further potential unrest and buy votes.

Having consolidated his hold on power with an election victory, Yeltsin will now be able to return the favor to imperialism with increased austerity attacks. An analyst at J.P. Morgan summed it up: "The economic front will be complicated by the stress on the federal budget from high election-year expenditures." But a Yeltsin victory means "lower political risks, greater capital inflows and lower domestic interest rates." (*New York Times*, May 31.)

At the same time, imperialists did not yet see the situation as so desperate, or Zyuganov as so hostile, to abandon the democratic facade and support elements in Russia (especially inside Yeltsin's administration) who wanted to call off the elections. Yeltsin's close aid and bodyguard General Aleksandr Korzhakov tested those waters in early May, advocating postponing the election, but found no backing and drew a public rebuke from Yeltsin. Individual bureaucrats aligned with the comprador regime may fear for their personal safety in the event of a possible fall from power, but for now the interests of the ruling class as a whole do not coincide with that outlook.

Like the leading Russian capitalists, the imperialists saw relentless economic pressure on a Communist Party government as an acceptable fallback position. The IMF had made clear its intention to stop monthly payments on its enormous loan to Russia if Zyuganov departed from its strict free-market, austerity and privatization requirements. With this leverage, coupled with Zyuganov's evident desire to accommodate, world capitalism could have tolerated a Communist Party government at the present conjuncture.

ZYUGANOV'S REACTIONARY NATIONALISM

While Zyuganov's orientation to economic issues is bad enough for the Russian working class, his nationalism has an alarming reactionary character. It is disgusting to see yet another chauvinist laying a wreath on Lenin's tomb on the anniversary of the October Revolution and calling himself a "Communist"! Many commentators on the left noted his claim to lead a bloc of "left-patriotic" forces and his earlier courting of General Lebed. But Zyuganov is not an unprincipled Red making tactical alliances with Browns. His reactionary streak runs much deeper than that.

The Western bourgeoisie worries that Zyuganov's hard nationalism might cause it more difficulties in East Europe. But he presents a much greater threat to the working class. Zyuganov claims to stand for a foreign policy of "maintaining continuity with the foreign policies of pre-revolutionary Russia and the Soviet Union." Not content to identify himself with Czarism, he proceeded to reach out to fascists: after the December elections, he wooed supporters of fascist demagogue Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, saying "we must explain to them that only after a genuine patriot is elected President of Russia will it be possible to dramatically change the situation in the country." He even called on Zhirinovskiy publicly to form a coalition with him — it was Zhirinovskiy who refused!

On top of this, Zyuganov puts forward backward, anti-Semitic, fundamentalist views as his underlying philosophy. In a recent series of books,

[Zyuganov] posit[s] a millennial struggle between East and West that began in 1054 with the schism between Orthodox and Roman Catholic Christianity. Orthodoxy's fight is based, says Zyuganov, on the fact that the West has "broken loose from its original cultural-religious traditions," largely because of the Industrial Revolution, which accelerated moral decline.

Zyuganov writes of the "ever more perceptible influence of Judaic dispersal, whose influence consistently grew by the day, even by the hour," [and adds] "The Jewish diaspora, which traditionally controlled the financial life of the continent, began expanding its own market by becoming the bearer of the controlling packet of shares in the complete industrial-economic system of Western civilization." (Adrian Karatnycky in the *New York Times*, March 5.)

Zyuganov wasn't talking like a Slavic nationalist in 1990 when he helped form the KPRF in opposition to Gorbachev's reforms. Nor was he then hedging his opposition to bourgeois reforms with open overtures to capital. But revolutionaries could see the trajectory and fundamental class nature of these bureaucrats even before the breakup of the USSR. As we wrote in PR 39 in Spring 1991:

The Stalinist hard-liners insist on central control, but have accepted many of perestroika's "reforms." To defend their bureaucratic positions in the state-run economy, they yield to privatization more reluctantly. This enables them to speak in the name of socialism and appeal to workers, but their real ties are to the military and other Russian chauvinists, including the anti-Jewish, fascistic Pamyat.

Nevertheless some on the left, as we will see, take Zyuganov as a legitimate representative of workers' interests.

STALINISTS BACK ZYUGANOV

Zyuganov released his party's official economic program in late May. Its proposals include "heavy state spending on industry, particularly the military-industrial complex, as well as education and medical care, ... strict price controls on

consumer goods and raw materials and lowering energy prices to stimulate domestic production." But when it comes to funding such measures, the plan comes totally unglued. Having renounced expropriation and fudging on nationalization, it relies weakly on protectionist measures and a hodgepodge of improved tax collection and central bank credits and investment incentives.

Some in Zyuganov's camp have taken a more radical posture. Most prominent is Workers' Russia, an electoral front group for the pro-Stalinist Russian Communist Workers' Party (RKRP in Russian). Its leader, Viktor Anpilov, calls for socialism and nationalization of the banks and industry. His fiery statements caused Zyuganov to be even more emphatic in defense of private property, lest any capitalists got the wrong idea. But Anpilov remained solidly behind Zyuganov in the election, providing hard pseudo-left cover and a better disguised trap for radicalizing workers.

That Workers' Russia is a trap, and fundamentally aligned with Zyuganov's wing of the Russian ruling class against the interests of the working class despite rhetorical surface differences, was shown clearly in a devastating expose of its program back in 1994 by the Committee for Workers' Democracy and International Socialism (a left split from Militant Labour's group in Russia). In an article, "Who Finances the RKRP and For What?" they quoted from Workers' Russia's social-economic program:

We are prepared to make those entrepreneurs who stand up for the national interests of Russia and help the workers' movement [read Workers' Russia] directors of the large firms they established, and even grant them privileges in the event of inevitable nationalization after the return to the genuine socialist path of development. Here we are speaking specifically about nationalization, not expropriation, and those serving this system do not have to fear for their fate. (*Rabochaya Demokratiya* No.5.)

The class nature of Workers' Russia was laid bare at an "All-Russia Congress of Soviets" held in Moscow May 18, featuring Zyuganov, Anpilov, other RKRP leaders and workers from around Russia. *Workers World* reported on this meeting at length, without of course commenting on the latent contradictions in the attitudes of the participants. While workers were talking about the need for an all-Russia general strike, Anpilov incredibly stated: "If the State Emergency Committee [the plotters of the defeated August 1991 coup] had had just one worker on it, the Soviet people would have supported it."

But Russian workers remember that the forces behind the coup attempt, with whom Zyuganov and Anpilov were allied, wanted to rein in the working class and ban strikes; they also remember that political strikes against the coup helped stop it. Anpilov may get away with such statements in the controlled atmosphere of a conference his party organized, but his views will never play before the Russian working class in motion, and he must be exposed to the class now.

THEIR GENERAL STRIKE AND OURS

The May "Congress of Soviets" featured militant talk of organizing an all-Russia general strike from both the RKRP leadership and the workers who attended. Although the ranks present surely were carefully selected by the congress organizers for basic allegiance to Anpilov (and therefore to Zyuganov as well), the distinctions between the misleaders and the misled came through loud and clear — even through

the filter of Workers World's coverage, which reported uncritically on everyone at the congress, including Zyuganov and 1991 coup leader General Valentin Varennikov.

The RKRP leaders cast the general strike exclusively in terms of opposition to Yeltsin's regime and support for Zyuganov. Anpilov "called on the people to take to the streets immediately after the election to prevent electoral fraud or a military coup." Revolutionaries defend the bourgeois-democratic rights of workers, and in the event of such violations of those rights by the capitalist state we would bloc militarily with workers mobilizing in protest and opposition. But the aim would not have been and will never be to lift Zyuganov to power; it would be to expose the treacherous politics of the Communist Party and the RKRP in struggle.

All that Anpilov offered if Zyuganov won and took office was that "Workers' Russia will hold a conference 100 days after the election to evaluate the Zyuganov government and whether it is moving toward capitalism or socialism." As if Zyuganov's program had to "move" to get to capitalism! That's 100 days Zyuganov would have had to accommodate capitalists and break strikes, all in the name of the national interests of the Russian people of course, with the "socialist" cover of sanction by the supposed radical left workers' party. The rank-and-file workers at the congress were not immune from the illusions their misleaders were spreading, but nevertheless they put forth the need for a general strike in much healthier terms. A worker from the Proletarian Workers in Leningrad said:

I am for Zyuganov, but elections alone will not change the situation. The strike is the weapon of the working class. And we need to organize a general strike.

Support for Zyuganov, unfortunately, but notice the difference: the need for a general strike is not made conditional on Yeltsin's remaining in power, but is posed in addition to elections alone. Revolutionaries in Russia today must fight for a general strike no matter which face of the capitalist ruling class heads the government. It is a necessary and vital measure for the working class to defend itself.

Revolutionaries will form a united front with all striking workers and argue among them for raising demands such as:

- End the Invasion of Chechnya! Unconditional Withdrawal of All Troops! Recognize Chechnya's Right to Self-Determination!

- Defend the Social Gains of the October Revolution! Free Access to Quality Health Care and Education for All!

- Jobs For All! A Sliding Scale of Hours and an Escalating Scale of Wages!

When the capitalists say that these are impossible pipedreams for Russia, we will expose their hypocrisy with demands such as:

- Open the Books of All Privatized and State-Owned Companies!

- Workers' Control of Industry! Expropriate the Banks!
- Renounce the Imperialist Debt!

Letters Welcome

We invite readers of *Proletarian Revolution* to send letters to the magazine. Names will be withheld on request. Write us at: P.O. Box 3573, New York, NY 10008, USA.

A key aim of a general strike for revolutionaries, as within any united front, would be to expose the misleaderships of the workers' movement before the class in struggle. We warn our fellow workers that they will betray the struggle for these demands whether or not they support the initial general strike mobilization. They will do so because they have fundamental ties to the capitalist system. As a worker at the congress put it:

Most of our factories are at a standstill and the workers laid off. The trade-union leaders are looking for capitalist investors to reopen the factories, so they don't participate in struggle.

Fake revolutionaries, on the other hand, tail the treacherous trade-union leaders and wax euphoric when the latter deign to recognize their "relevance." Congress Chairperson Vladimir Koryagin beamed, along with his Workers World supporters:

This April, workers across Russia went on strike. And for the first time trade-union leaders asked Communists to march with them. The isolation of the left has ended.

BUILD THE REVOLUTIONARY PARTY!

Real revolutionaries understand that, just as progress

comes through struggle, so learning comes through experience. As the most class-conscious Russian workers come to see in struggle that their demands cannot be met and their goals cannot be achieved under capitalism, our task is to engage them and win them to our position: Only proletarian socialist revolution, and worldwide at that, can transcend the inhuman barbarism the capitalist system is ever more mercilessly inflicting on our world. Only it can allow us to create a truly humane society fit for human beings to live in, a classless communist society.

All Russian workers who thus come to share this understanding must unite to build the revolutionary party of the working class in Russia as part of the re-created Fourth International, the World Party of Socialist Revolution. There is no denying the immensity and difficulty of this task, particularly considering the challenges that the Russian working class' present state of atomization and international isolation poses for communication between revolutionary-minded workers there and their comrades throughout the world. But Marxists say what is, and the daunting scope of the task only highlights its utter necessity and makes it all the more imperative that a genuine revolutionary pole of attraction for radicalizing workers be forged in Russia today. ●

Vote for Zyuganov?

While Workers World and the CPUSA backed his candidacy uncritically, some on the international left thought that Zyuganov should be supported critically against Yeltsin. One example was in *International Viewpoint*, the magazine of the "Trotskyist" United Secretariat. On the basis that stopping Yeltsin would open up a "radicalizing dynamic with potential to extend well beyond anything that Zyuganov himself had in mind," Alexander Buzgalin, Andrei Kolganov and Renfrey Clarke concluded that "In the second round of elections, we have to agitate for a vote against Yeltsin or any other right-wing candidate." Since the second round was clearly going to be a Yeltsin-Zyuganov run-off, that was a backhanded way of saying vote for Zyuganov.

A WORKERS' PARTY?

British Workers Power came to the same conclusion explicitly, arguing that the KPRF is a Stalinist workers' party and should be given the same "critical support" in elections they habitually give to Western bourgeois workers' parties like British Labour or the French CP and SP.

We disagree. In reality Zyuganov is the candidate of industrial bosses who demand a Russia less openly dependent on Western capitalist interests. His link to the Stalinist CP of the USSR does not represent any proletarian affiliation but rather his ties to a section of the Stalinist ruling class of statified capital. From a class stance Zyuganov must be opposed as much as Yeltsin.

But this raises a theoretical question: shouldn't *all* supporters of the "deformed workers' state" theory (whether or not they think that Russia has already undergone capitalist restoration) support Zyuganov?

After all, they hold not only that the USSR until Yeltsin was a proletarian state, but also that the post-World War II Stalinist states became workers' states

because of the Communist Parties' seizures of power. That should mean that the CPSU and its offspring, the KPRF, are at least as proletarian as Western socialist or communist parties. Yeltsin, moreover, is the architect of capitalist restoration in their minds. So the pseudo-Trotskyists should, from their outlook, offer critical support to the KPRF.

WHY NO CRITICAL SUPPORT?

Why don't they? *Socialist Action*, for one, begs off on the grounds that "None of the major candidates offers a program in the interests of the Russian workers or seeks to mobilize them." (June 1996.) True, but then neither do British Labour or the French Socialists or Communists.

The Spartacists' *Workers Vanguard* asserts:

Despite its red flags and talk of restoring the Soviet Union, the KPRF is neither a communist nor even a reformist working-class party, but rather a bourgeois-nationalist party which promotes Russia's imperial ambitions. (Feb. 2.)

Bourgeois nationalist and imperialist it is (and so was the CPSU beforehand, from the time of the Stalinist counterrevolution). But British Labour, the French SP, etc. are equally chauvinist and imperialist, in deeds if not always in words. So these attributes do not show that the KPRF is not a reformist workers' party.

If Stalinism is a political current that can not only rule over but also create "workers' states," it ought to be qualitatively preferable to an open counterrevolutionary like Yeltsin. The fact that "Trotskyists" who maintain the deformed workers' state formula couldn't bring themselves to vote for Zyuganov shows once again the flimsiness of their rationalization-in-lieu-of-theory — and their inability to stand up to bourgeois public opinion in the West.

Britain: Death Agony of the Labour Left

by Matthew Richardson

The class struggle has reached a turning point in Britain. The working class is looking to regain its fighting strength after years of setbacks. At the same time, the old apparatus of the Labour Party left, which has been responsible for the defeat of every major working class struggle in Britain this century, is breaking up. Once a force within Labour and the unions, the left has been crippled by successive attacks from the party's right-wing leaders. Now, with Labour likely to replace the Tory Party as the Queen's government after the next elections, the party's leaders have escalated these attacks in preparation for governing on behalf of British imperialism.

In response, Arthur Scargill, head of the National Union of Mineworkers and a leading figure of the Labour left, has called on unions and leftists to break from Labour and build his new reformist Socialist Labour Party (SLP). But most of his old allies have called for continued allegiance to Labour. On the far left, Britain's centrist groups — those that cover their reformist practice with revolutionary words — are divided over which of the two reformist trends to follow.

The crisis of the Labour left gives revolutionary workers an exceptional opportunity to chart a course of struggle free of Labourism. This article aims to contribute to this task and to draw the lessons that can be used by revolutionaries the world over to deal with their reformist misleaders.

TORY CRISIS

The Tory Party government under the leadership of Margaret Thatcher seemed invincible during the 1980's. Her attacks on welfare, privatizations and successful confrontations with the unions earned her the title of "Iron Lady." The "Thatcher boom" saw profits rise steadily.

But by 1990 Thatcher's government was in crisis. Britain had entered its longest post-war recession. The capitalists' need to further integrate into the European economy seemed threatened by her hostility to the European Union. And the Tories' Poll Tax, an austerity attack on the entire working class, was defeated by a mass struggle, forcing them to avoid any more major clashes. Seeing her now as a liability, the Tories replaced Thatcher as party leader with the pro-European Union, less provocative but also less decisive John Major. Just when capital needed a strong government the Tories showed increasing indecision and weakness.

The British ruling class looked to Labour for an alternative. But it has always been wary of Labour, whose union base makes it more subject to pressure from the working class. So capitalists sought a new Labour leadership that was not only committed to austerity but that could also be trusted to suppress working-class pressure.

The Labour tops under Neil Kinnock had tried throughout the 1980's to earn this trust by attacking the power of the unions and the left in the party. But even when they won, they did so only after lengthy battles, showing that they were not in complete control. And they still covered their attacks with talk of significant reforms, when the ruling class demanded uncompromising austerity.

With new Labour leader Tony Blair, many capitalists feel they have found their man. Immediately upon winning the party leadership, Blair set out to show the ruling class that he

would make a decisive break with past appeals to the working class with promises of reform and socialism. Instead, he appealed to "disaffected Tory voters," making clear he would not reverse Thatcher's anti-working class measures but would rather create opportunities for the "aspirant classes."

BLAIR'S 'NEW LABOUR'

Blair knew that while he could win enthusiasm from the bourgeoisie, to implement his policies with confidence he needed to attack Labour's left. He aimed not to inflict a smashing defeat on the unions but rather to separate the leaders who could be relied on to restrain working-class opposition from those who would not so readily sell out.

The battle Blair chose was over Clause Four of Labour's constitution, which formally committed the party to collective ownership of the economy and a redistribution of wealth. His plan worked: while Scargill led the left in calling the attack on Clause Four "a declaration of war" on "the very soul of the Labour Party," Blair triumphed thanks to the support of most of the union leaders, who accept austerity and aim only to limit it. As the bourgeois *Economist* enthused:

In two months, Mr. Blair has achieved more than Mr. Smith [Labour's previous leader] in two years . . . Clause Four stands for Labour's intellectual debt to Marx, for its origins as a party of struggling proletarians, for the politics of protest and confrontation.

Blair continues to make clear that his government will offer workers little. He has refused to commit himself to a minimum wage unless it has the approval of big business. He opposes re-nationalizing industries privatized by Thatcher. He is committed to maintaining the Tories' anti-union laws. He repeatedly reminds the public that the "trade unions can expect no special favors from a Labour government". The *Financial Times* summed up:

The direction in which he seeks to lead the people's party is away from state socialism, trade union dominance, high taxation, carefree expenditure, acquiescence in inflation, class warfare and some of the expensive but anachronistic traditions of the 50 year-old welfare state. It is towards becoming the party that tackles crime, supports the family, restores civic society, reconstructs the constitution and pursues social and economic objectives that are little different from one-nation Tories.

Thus Blair has succeeded in winning the support of a significant sector of the British ruling class. Increasing numbers of capitalists are declaring their support for Labour. Tony Benn, leader of the Labour left, while somewhat exaggerating the unanimity of Labour's capitalist support, nonetheless showed some insight when he wrote:

The British establishment believes that Major is not strong enough to make the cuts in the welfare state that they need. They believe that New Labour will. They are giving full endorsement to Labour for that reason — they think it will be strong enough to attack these gains of working people. (*Weekly Worker*, October 19, 1995.)

END OF A WORKERS' PARTY?

Many leftists see Blair's revision of Clause Four as proof of a fundamental change in the nature of the Labour

Party. Having previously seen Labour as a workers' party capable of leading the struggle for socialism, they now see it as similar to liberal capitalist parties like the U.S. Democrats.

But this is not a correct understanding of Labour, past or present. Labour has always been different from bourgeois parties like the Democrats. Not because of its politics, which have always defended capitalism in practice, but because of its *organizational* relationship to the working class.

Built by the unions in the early 1900's, Labour has always relied on them for active support and funding. This led many socialists to mistakenly think that the Labour Party was a genuine political party of the working class. But Labour has never represented the proletariat's anti-capitalist interests. Rather, it has expressed the pro-capitalist interests of the more privileged labor aristocracy and union bureaucracy, who have a stake in the system. As Lenin noted, no matter how many workers joined Labour, its petty-bourgeois reformist leadership meant that it was a capitalist party:

Of course, most of the Labour Party's members are working men. However, whether or not a party is really a political party of the workers does not depend solely upon a membership of workers but also upon the men that lead it, and the content of its activities and its political tactics. Only this latter determines whether we really have before us a political party of the proletariat. Regarded from this, the only correct, point of view, the Labour Party is a thoroughly bourgeois party, because, although made up of workers, it is led by reactionaries, and the worst kind of reactionaries at that, who act quite in the spirit of the bourgeoisie. It is an organization of the bourgeoisie, which exists to systematically dupe the workers . . . (Collected Works, Vol. 31, pp. 257-8.)

Lenin correctly saw Labour as a roadblock to revolution that workers must learn to destroy in the course of their struggle to build the revolutionary party.

But Labour also embodies an organizational gain of the working class. Without a party of their own, British workers previously could only choose between bourgeois parties in elections — thus sacrificing their independent organization at the polls. To express the contradiction between its bourgeois political character and its organizational base in the working class, Lenin called Labour a "bourgeois workers' party."

The Leninist understanding of Labour has been confirmed by the class struggle in Britain over the following 75 years. Labour has always been loyal to the capitalists, including rescuing them from the two major crises it faced since the Second World War. The post-war Attlee government defused a growing strike wave and massive radicalization of workers. Promising socialism, Labour could grant workers major concessions like full employment and health care, based on the economic boom. At the same time it used the army and police to repress more radical struggles.

Then, when the post-war boom turned to crisis and strikes crippled the Tory government of Edward Heath in the early 1970's, Labour again took power promising socialism. But the governments of Wilson and Callaghan gave workers a crippling wage freeze, mass unemployment and brutal cuts in social services through their "Social Contract." Thus they paved the way for Thatcher.

Free of any illusions in Labour, we can see that the "socialist party" many on the left mourn never existed. Labour's socialist rhetoric was always a lie, so Blair's attacks on it do not represent a fundamental change in the real character of the party. Moreover, it is quite possible that

under pressure from a mass working-class upsurge in the future, even right-wing Labour leaders will again turn to militant and socialist rhetoric to deceive the workers.

Moreover, the unions still maintain their decisive bloc of votes at Labour conferences, and workers can still join the party through its local constituencies. Thus Labour still allows for the possibility of the working class forcing to the head of the party the reformist leaders it may look to in the future. A negative confirmation of the fact that the leaders have not severed the party's reliance on the working class is that Blair could not have revised Clause Four without union support.

For Labour to be transformed into an open party of the bourgeoisie like the Democrats, it would have to fundamentally change its organizational relationship with the



Tony Benn and Arthur Scargill. Once together, Labour lefts now are building separate traps for unwary workers.

working class. This can happen only through a momentous clash between the party and the class. Labour's relationship with the working class, embodied in the union bloc vote, gives workers the option of testing their leaders by placing them in power. Whether workers should exercise this option is a tactical question, but revolutionaries must fiercely defend the union bloc vote within the Labour Party from the modernizers' attacks so workers can use it if necessary.

DECLINE OF THE LABOUR LEFT

While the right-wing changes in the Labour Party under Blair are not fundamental, they are important. Blair's revision of Clause Four *does* mark a watershed — in the decline of the left within the Labour Party.

Through every betrayal and attack on the working class led by the Labour Party, its left wing (as well as every major left group outside its ranks), has refused to break from Labour. This treacherous loyalty has been crucial to Labour's ability to defend bourgeois rule. For example, the key to Attlee's success in restraining the working class was the Stalinist Communist Party, which wielded its power in the union bureaucracy to prevent any struggle that threatened the Labour government. Similarly, through its control of the shop stewards' movement, the CP was decisive in enforcing

the Wilson/Callaghan government's Social Contract. When the working class erupted in the 1977 "Winter of Discontent," every major left group maintained support for the Labour government. Because the CP had lost influence over many radicalized workers, more radical-talking centrists were decisive in misleading the struggle by supporting Labour.

Following the collapse of the Callaghan government and the rise of Thatcher, the Labour left led by Tony Benn had a brief rise in influence within the party. It won increased control by the party conference over the parliamentary wing; its choice for party leader, Neil Kinnock, was elected. In 1981, the left reached its peak when Benn ran for deputy party leader and lost by a hair. He immediately called for "unity" under "the existing policies and leadership" rather than a continued struggle against the right wing of the party.

The party leaders saw in Benn's call for unity the weakness that would allow them to undercut the left in order to prepare for running a capitalist government. Kinnock attacked the unions' bloc vote, driving it down from 90 percent of conference votes to 70 and then 50 percent, and launched purges against radical leftists in the party. But the party left still called for unity and supported Kinnock.

AFTER THE MINERS' STRIKE

The retreat accelerated following the miners' strike led by Scargill in 1984-85. Faced with a massive mobilization of workers against Thatcher's government, Labour opposed the mine closures but also opposed the strike that challenged the government. When huge police mobilizations brutalized and harassed strikers and their supporters, Kinnock condemned both workers and cops for the violence.

The leaders of the Trade Union Congress (TUC) shared Kinnock's desire to contain the strike. But the fierce struggles of the miners and their many working-class supporters opened up an opportunity to fight against the TUC leaders for a general strike. As a prominent workers' leader, Scargill, by leading a fight against Kinnock and for a leadership committed to mass action and class-struggle policies, could have won masses of workers from the grip of the Labour leadership. Such a struggle could have defeated the Tory attacks and rallied the class for a fight against the whole capitalist system.

But Scargill was committed to the strategy of electing Labour and pushing it to the left — *not* pushing it aside for the workers to advance their struggle and build a revolutionary party. He knew that a mass working-class challenge to the TUC and Labour leadership threatened his reformist perspective. So he covered up the TUC leaders' refusal to support the strike, defending them from criticism and opposing those who fought for a general strike. When the Labour leadership came up for election, Scargill joined the rest of the left in supporting Kinnock unanimously. He preferred to see his union gutted than to unleash a mass struggle that could threaten the Labour bureaucracy.

Thus the Labour left's craven loyalty to the leadership paved the way for the rout it has suffered under Blair. Now, its rank-and-file base of support is crumbling: almost 40,000 have left the party in reaction to Blair's policies and the left's failure to pose a real alternative — most no doubt demoralized by the experience. The Labour left is in its death agony. Responsible for derailing every major working-class struggle in Britain this century, it must be buried once and for all, lest it lead future struggles to ruin.

Scargill now wants to revive the Labour left in a new

party safe from the attacks of the Blairite "modernizers." He has split from Labour and launched the SLP. But the "socialism" of Scargill's SLP is no alternative to Labour. Scargill has made clear that he wants a return to the "socialist commitment" of old Labour. Far from reassessing the left-Labourite politics that have proved so hopeless, he wants the Labour left to revive its old policies in a new party.

SCARGILL'S NEW SLP

The "socialist" policies Scargill has advanced are at best a reformist pipe-dream. For example, he says "a Labour Government could solve unemployment even within a capitalist society — overnight, provided it introduced a four-day work week, banned all non-essential overtime, and introduced voluntary retirement at age 55," as well as rebuild the National Health Service and improve education. But British capitalism cannot afford these concessions. On the contrary, it can only survive by cutting spending on the "social wage" — education, health care and other services — and by cutting workers' regular wages by increasing unemployment.

These austerity policies are a matter of life and death for capital. The ruling class will use all the powers at its disposal, including the armed forces, to prevent decisive pro-working class policies from being enacted — as the experience of coups and counterrevolutionary putsches around the world proves. However, the only means Scargill suggests for winning his program is electing the SLP to parliament. His parliamentary reformism leaves state power in the hands of the capitalists and blinds the workers to the need for their own revolutionary party. Most importantly, it does not include mass struggles, the only way the proletariat can become sufficiently organized and politically conscious to defeat the capitalists and build socialism.

Such policies were an important factor in Scargill's misleadership of the miners' strike in the 1980's. Coal mines were an obsolete and inefficient energy source, and the capitalists wanted to shut them down and wipe out thousands of jobs. Socialists defend every worker whose job is under attack. But while capitalists use technological advance to raise profits and increase unemployment, socialism would make use of such advances to supply society with its needs while freeing us from the burden of overwork. The necessary work will be divided among all, and none will suffer.

STATE CAPITALIST POLICIES

But Scargill's solution was for the capitalist state to subsidize the coal industry to cover the costs of its inefficiencies. This is not a socialist but a state capitalist policy — and as the collapse of the statified capitalist Stalinist economies showed, that leads to economic catastrophe. Under capitalism, socialists must demand that the state maintain the jobs of all workers until it can guarantee other employment. The miners' struggle could have proved the possibility for the socialist policy of jobs for all through a sliding scale of hours and won the support of the masses, had a genuinely revolutionary party leadership been there to fight for it. While the strike won widespread support among workers, it could never have sustained and expanded this support with a policy that meant draining the economy to support unnecessary jobs.

State capitalist policies like to tie the working class to the capitalist state through its "benevolent" protection. In this way they undermine the workers' independent class organization and spur the growth of nationalism (or example, by promoting tariffs against cheaper energy imports),

encouraging workers to see foreign workers as competitors rather than class brothers and sisters.

Indeed, having always emphasized the need to fight for a "socialist Britain", Scargill is now becoming more overtly nationalist. His *Discussion Paper* on the SLP, for example, cites as Labour's worst betrayals of the working class not its maintenance of Thatcher's anti-union laws, privatizations, racist immigration laws or repression of Northern Ireland's Catholics — but the reversal of its old "Little England" nationalism in favor of support for the European Common

Mass picket during 1984-85 British miners' strike. Neither Scargill nor left broke with Labour betrayers then.



Market! In blurring the class line and emphasizing British nationalism, Scargill even diluted his beloved Clause Four. The version the SLP adopted replaces the old text's promise of economic justice to the "workers by hand or brain" with similar promises to the "British people."

The most controversial debate at the SLP's founding convention in May was over immigration policy. The SLP leaders argued against a proposal to oppose all immigration controls as anti-working class and racist. They claimed an SLP government would need "non-racist" immigration controls, since these would be necessary to prevent right-wingers from fleeing a future socialist government in South Africa! The fact that the SLP leadership resorted to silly arguments — why would rightists flee a socialist South Africa to a supposedly similar Britain with the SLP in power? — shows that the SLP is a nationalist party hoping to ally itself with backward workers fearful of competition from "foreigners."

Thus Scargill's program does not express the historic interests of the working class. Rather, it attempts to artificially sustain the partial privileges of a relatively small strata of workers through protectionist policies that aim to hide from the world market rather than overthrow it.

SCARGILL: BUREAUCRACY FIRST, MASSES LATER

Scargill knew that by breaking from Labour and leading a party that claims to fight for socialism, he would raise expectations among many workers who want to fight capitalism. But while genuine socialists base their confidence on such workers, Scargill sees them as a threat. He knows that with a renewed sense of class power, many workers will go beyond reformism and look for a revolutionary road to socialism.

The miners' struggles taught him the need for a strong bureaucracy to restrain workers from going too far.

That explains why he first turned to the union and Labour left bureaucracy to build his SLP. Rather than hold public meetings, he organized secretly with select union and Labour bureaucrats to found the party, starting not with a program for socialism but with a constitution aimed at ensuring a compliant membership.

It was inevitable that the SLP would attract many of the far-left groups that have been driven from the Labour Party

and were looking for a new home. Scargill understood this and feared that they would encourage dissent within the ranks of his party. So he included a clause in the party constitution that bans from membership any member of another political organization: leftists who want to join would have to first leave their organizations or see them dissolve. This is a more dictatorial constitution than Labour's, serving to rule out factions and any challenge to Scargill's leadership. The point was not to keep leftists from the party but to ensure that any who joined would be thoroughly housebroken.

Nevertheless, many self-proclaimed Trotskyists volunteered to help build Scargill's SLP. While some smaller groups enrolled their individual members and dissolved their organizations to do so, the larger ones remain outside.

Necessary as it was for Scargill, excluding the left posed an immediate problem: in the absence of significant support from within the union and Labour-left bureaucracies, Scargill's SLP would fail to attract members. A number of middle-ranking NUM officials joined, along with over half the executive board of the Rail and Maritime Transport Workers union, but they did not bring many workers with them. And Scargill was abandoned by most of his old allies of the Labour left. Tony Benn, for example, actively opposed the SLP and asked "left wingers to stick with Labour." But Scargill still hopes to win sections of the Labour left. Accordingly, he is making sure the SLP does not antagonize them by criticizing their actions in parliament or the unions and has promised that the SLP will not oppose "socialist MPs" in any election.

With little support, Scargill led the SLP in running in a by-election in February. The seat the SLP chose to contest

was Hemsworth, which includes many of Yorkshire's mines and thousands of ex-miners and their families who had fought in the miners' strike. If the SLP was to find a base anywhere, it would be here. It chose Brenda Nixon, ex-leader of Women Against Pit Closures, as its candidate, and was greatly assisted by left groups Scargill had excluded from the SLP's ranks, who campaigned for the SLP uncritically.

However, the SLP failed to win any significant support in the working class. It received 5.4 percent of a low turnout, while Labour increased its vote slightly to 71.9 percent. In this pro-Labour working-class electorate, even the Tories and the Liberal Democrats outvoted the SLP!

This failure should have been little surprise. The SLP posed a passive parliamentary road to winning improvements in living and working conditions not fundamentally different from what Labour offers. But workers understand that if any such improvements are to be gained through parliament, the maximum number of seats must be won. Knowing that the SLP could not win the election, they chose Labour. "Better vote for Labour who won't be as bad as the Tories than waste a vote on a party with better policies but no chance of implementing them," many undoubtedly reasoned.

MILITANT LABOUR'S DEAD-END MODEL

The largest far left group that rallied to Scargill's call for the SLP was Militant Labour. For decades ML had lodged in the Labour Party, claiming a long-term perspective of transforming it into a revolutionary party. It held that the masses of workers would flood into the ranks of Labour at the onset of any mass struggle, overwhelming the right wing and moving naturally towards socialist consciousness. Such a perspective was the trade mark of all of ML's affiliates around the world — from supporters in the U.S. working with union bureaucrats to build a reformist labor party, to South Africans inside the bourgeois African National Congress.

While inside Labour, Militant increasingly adapted to reformism, politically and organizationally. It held that socialism could be built in Britain without a violent revolution to smash the capitalists' state power. It capitulated to British imperialism, refusing to fight for Irish self-determination and for the defeat of British imperialism in its war with Argentina in 1982. When the Labour leaders launched one offensive after another against it in the 1980's, ML retreated. It accepted losses like the destruction of Labour's youth organization (which it dominated) as the price for remaining inside until the masses would flood in.

A few years ago, ML split. A minority led by Ted Grant was prepared to stay in Labour no matter what, while the majority led by Peter Taaffe saw that if the organization was to be salvaged, ML would have to leave Labour's ranks. Since then, the Grantites have disintegrated and the Taaffeite ML is left as an independent political organization without an independent political perspective. ML saw in the crisis of the Labour left an opportunity to recruit from people leaving Labour's ranks but not breaking from their old Labourite politics. So they raised the idea of a new non-revolutionary mass party before the 1995 Labour conference.

ML had planned to vote for Blair's Labour Party in the next election and then try to launch a new party, but they leaped at the opportunity to support Scargill's SLP. Overlooking that their old policy of transforming Labour into a genuine workers' party had proved bankrupt, ML now echoes Scargill in saying that the Labour Party has undergone a "decisive, qualitative change in character" and is now not

fundamentally different from the U.S. Democrats and other capitalist parties. (*Socialism Today*, December 1995.)

When they wrote that an SLP "must not be a British Labour Party Mark II," ML appeared to express the desire of revolutionary-minded workers who want to break from reformism. ML does not want an openly pro-capitalist leadership nor another purely parliamentary party. But their perspective leads directly to the same reformist dead-end. ML raised no criticisms of the program Scargill previewed in his *Discussion Paper*, nor does it argue that the Scargill leadership had to be fought if the SLP is to really represent the interests of the working class. Rather, ML aimed to build the SLP on Scargill's reformist program — and to push Scargill to the left if not to replace him at some indefinite point in the future. Such a strategy could only serve to build support for Scargill's bureaucratic misleadership, setting up the working class to be trapped in the reformists' grip when they rise in struggle.

Despite their pleading for Scargill to reconsider, ML was effectively excluded from the SLP. But they remain undeterred from their perspective of building a new reformist party. On the one hand, ML enlisted in the SLP election campaign in Hemsworth, refraining from criticizing the SLP on any fundamental question besides its undemocratic rules. It even cooperated with Scargill's edict that SLP campaigners not distribute anything other than official SLP literature. On the other, ML has turned to building left-unity groups called Socialist Forums and Socialist Alliances around the country, describing them as "vital preparatory work for the formation of a new party of the left capable of gaining mass support for socialism." (*Socialism Today*, February 1996.) They aim to build these groups and then pressure Scargill to allow them into the SLP.

That ML's strategy leads to a death-trap for the working class is made clear by their frequent suggestion that Italy's Rifondazione Comunista (RC) is a model the SLP should follow. But RC has already proved that new reformist parties are no alternative to old ones. In parliament, RC voted last year for Prime Minister Dini's austerity program and thereby saved his bourgeois government. This year it supports the popular-frontist Olive Tree coalition, whose victory was celebrated by financiers worldwide, with good reason.

REVOLUTIONARIES AND SCARGILL'S SLP

The danger posed by Scargill's SLP and Militant Labour's support for it is this: a new reformist party threatens to rescue the capitalists by derailing the mass working-class struggles now on the horizon. Revolutionaries must unequivocally oppose the creation of such a party.

How revolutionaries oppose reformist parties is a tactical question based on the relationship of the party to the working class at different times. For example, when decisive layers of workers are entering the ranks of a reformist party, revolutionaries can join them, to fight by their side for policies and tactics that answer the immediate needs of the entire class. In this way, we can expose the reformist leadership by showing that they oppose such a program, thereby proving the need for the revolutionary party. Or, when key layers of workers hold the illusion that electing a reformist workers' party will advance their struggle, revolutionaries can advocate critical support for the reformists. In doing so, we openly warn that the reformists will betray the workers, but we seek to prove this by putting them to the test of office.

Scargill's call for the SLP is a response to Blair's attacks

and the left's failure to defeat them. It is not a creation of or even a reaction to a radicalized and mobilized working class. We have seen no suggestion that a new layer of militants is being attracted to the party. Nor are illusions in the SLP a decisive factor holding back any layer of workers from rallying to the revolutionary party; the reformists who sit atop the SLP are unchallenged. Under these conditions, to support the SLP by joining or advocating electoral support for it is to help build a trap to snare the working class in the future.

But this does not mean that revolutionaries should refuse to participate in meetings and events organized around the call for an SLP. We should intervene in such meetings in order to solidarize with the desire of workers to break from Labourism and fight for socialism — and to make clear that Scargill's SLP means no such thing. Revolutionary intervention would also make it more difficult for any far-left groups that have entered the SLP, since it could expose their opportunism to their own supporters.

In certain situations, if some workers do have illusions that the SLP represents a break from Labourism and a step toward a real socialist party, revolutionaries could advocate policies for the SLP or raise demands on its leaders to prove they don't stand for a break with Labour's basic politics. If the SLP had attracted a number of such workers, revolutionaries should have found a way to have comrades present at the SLP convention, for example, in order to participate in the struggle over the party's program.

Revolutionaries could have raised and supported motions on basic revolutionary policies as well as tactical questions. For example, the current strike by dock workers in Liverpool is not being supported by the Labour leaders or the union they belong to. Revolutionaries could demand that Scargill & Co. condemn the union leaders, call on other unions to support the struggle and join in organizing solidarity actions like mass pickets. We would warn that Scargill and the other reformist leaders will betray such a struggle and would argue that this adds further proof of the need for a revolutionary party.

SWP: OPPOSING SCARGILL FROM THE RIGHT

The Socialist Workers Party (SWP) is the biggest party to the left of Labour in Britain today. It opposed Scargill's SLP with the pseudo-revolutionary objection that because Scargill wants his SLP to run in elections, the SLP will inevitably be reformist:

In words it is possible to talk about combining serious intervention in the elections with struggle outside the [House of] Commons. In practice the two pull in opposite directions. The search for votes pushes a party towards a softening of its message, towards a search for accommodation with the union leaders in order to secure backing and finance. The alternative is to center on struggle and to recognize that in any situation short of an insurrection revolutionary socialists will appeal to only a minority of the class. (*Socialist Worker*, Nov. 25.)

However, it is Scargill's politics and not whether the SLP contests elections that makes his party reformist. The argument that participation in elections leads inevitably to opportunism is nonsense that has no place in the Marxist tradition. From the Bolsheviks in the Tsarist Duma, to the Third and Fourth Internationals of Lenin and Trotsky, participation in elections was advocated as an opportunity for revolutionary, anti-electoralist propaganda and agitation.

Indeed the revolutionary party should contest elections

at the first opportunity, with the aim of gaining a wider audience for its revolutionary ideas. It is an indictment of the SWP that it does not do so. The SWP's real opposition to Scargill's SLP and running in elections comes not from the left but from the right, because central to their political perspective is political support for the Labour Party. The SWP hopes to recruit by posing as the "best builders" of day-to-day trade union struggles and political protests. In immediate struggles they base their tactics and demands not on what is objectively necessary for victory, but on what they believe workers are ready to accept. This most often means raising no more than the demands and tactics already being raised by the union leaders.

BEST DEFENDERS OF A LABOUR GOVERNMENT

Importantly, the SWP opposes raising class-wide political demands like a sliding scale of hours to provide jobs for all — demands that can link the partial demands of the workers today to the need for centralized political solutions to their whole class's needs. Instead, until the working class is ready for revolution, the SWP will support Labour as long as possible. It combines militant Labourism with a separate organization to corral those who understand that one day workers will have to go beyond Labourism.

Now confronted by Scargill's SLP, the SWP can't point to any immediate concrete political differences. It has recently been raising the slogan, "Hate the Tories? Worried About Blair? Join the Socialists." Scargill's SLP could well say: "Hate the Tories? Hate Blair? Join the Socialists" — a slogan to the left of the SWP! Indeed, Scargill has accurately condemned those on the left who continue to support Labour under the guise of uniting against the Tories — when Labour itself is planning to attack the working class. And with a leader so associated in workers' minds with big strikes, the SLP could have a more militant image than the SWP.

Thus Scargill's left split from Labour threatens the SWP's *raison d'être* as a separate organization. The SWP's argument that the SLP's participation in elections would make it reformist and therefore no real alternative to Labour is a desperate, artificial objection raised to preserve the SWP's independent bureaucratic apparatus.

Confirming their hypocrisy, when the SWP felt pressure from members attracted to Scargill's SLP, it too enlisted in the SLP's Hemsworth election campaign, offering few criticisms of the SLP's reformist program.

The SWP was particularly vulnerable to Scargill's challenge because it has been moving to the right as a result of its loyalty to the Labour Party. In the past, the SWP did not have to work so hard to convince workers to vote Labour; today it finds itself drawn into the vacuum left by the decay of the Labour left.

Consider the role of Paul Foot, a leading SWP figure who has been particularly responsible for arousing support for Labour. Following a series of uncritical interviews with leaders of the Labour left in the SWP's magazine, Foot wrote a column entitled "Ten Things Everyone Should Know About the Labour Party". The first of the ten is:

Labour, which is linked to organized workers, is better at any time than the Tories, who are linked to organized capital. (*Socialist Review*, October 1994.)

In fact, Labour governments are no less capitalist than the Tories. Moreover, as the SWP once admitted, many Labour governments have been worse for the working class than the Tory governments that preceded them. The fact that

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Labour is not funded by organized capital in no way negates its role as bourgeois agents, as Lenin repeatedly explained.

Foot went on to describe how without mass struggle pressuring the party, Labour governments are forced by the ruling class to act in its interests. Indeed the SWP increasingly argues that what Labour needs to beat the Tories is struggles by rank and file workers. It encourages workers to launch workplace struggles in order to support Labour.

Labour victories at the polls need to be reinforced by real labour victories. ... Defiance, if widespread enough, would start to win concessions and victories. These will be worth in real ideas and in real votes a hundred times the lead in the opinion polls, and will lay some sort of foundation for a Labour victory which could mean something. (*Socialist Review*, June 1994.)

In another article, Foot extends this analysis, previewing how the SWP will act under a Blair government. First he paints past Labour leaders as sincere but incapable of implementing the policies they wanted because they never had control of the economy. Foot again volunteers the working class as Blair's best hope for political success, even though he admits that Blair is no friend of the workers:

Particularly if he is successful in taming any industrial action or confidence before his election, Blair will find himself at the mercy of an arrogant and contemptuous ruling class, eager at once to humiliate him and subdue him to its purpose. All the signs are that he will be a willing captive. ... Tossed about like a cork in a whirlpool, he will jettison one commitment after another until, no doubt, he will start to study how his illustrious predecessor Ramsay MacDonald escaped a similar plight and stayed in Downing Street at the head of the Tory party. It won't be long into a Blair government before the Tories and their press start to howl for a government of national unity. (*International Socialism* 67.)

This is nonsense. The British ruling class is increasingly looking to Blair as their leader because he is committed to their needs and represents the potential for a stronger, more stable capitalist government than the Tories. While they may wish to push Blair to launch even greater attacks on the masses than he plans, they will hardly seek to humiliate him. On the contrary, they will look to support his government against the threat of mass working-class struggles.

The greatest danger in Foot's argument is that it suggests that not only are the Tories and "their system" the main enemy of the working class right now, but they will still be so under a Blair government. The logical extension of the SWP's advocacy of working-class struggles in support of a Labour victory is that the immediate task of the workers' movement if Blair wins would not be defense against attacks led by Labour, but defense of Blair against the capitalists.

And Foot almost explicitly blurted this out:

The economic state we're in — and the whole history of Labourism this century — points to the inevitable collapse of a Blair administration, with horrific social consequences. This will not just be a personal tragedy for Tony Blair. The pit into which Tony Blair will certainly fall beckons all of us. The failure of a government in which so many socialists and trade unions have placed their faith could lead to widespread cynicism and pessimism. ... In its basic electoral support and in its links with the unions, Labour is still a party with working class roots. When Labour does well at the polls, its worker supporters feel better, more confident; and when Labour goes down, its

supporters go down too.

Workers should draw their confidence from their collective power as a class, certainly not from capitalist parties like Labour. Seeing workers placing their faith in Labour, the SWP's Foot calls for a campaign to support Labour so it won't disappoint them, instead of seeing the need to fight against these deadly illusions.

The working class's fate is not tied to Labour. A Blair government would itself launch attacks against the working class and would aid the capitalists in their attacks. Workers will have to respond with mass struggles, which would have the potential to bring down the Labour government; that would be a victory and a big step toward revolution. Foot's argument suggests that when Blair attacks the working class, this can be countered by fighting to force Labour to take on the Tory capitalists. This policy could lead the SWP to oppose tactics like the general strike needed to defeat Blair's attacks — because they potentially threaten the Labour government.

WORKERS POWER'S CAPITULATION TO SCARGILL

A group that appears to be well to the left of the SWP in Britain is Workers Power (WP). Indeed, before Scargill called for his SLP, when only far-left groups like ML were calling for a new mass party, WP seemed prepared to adopt a revolutionary attitude toward a new reformist party:

The job of revolutionaries is not to give credence to the remnants of Stalinism and left reformism but to fight them, ever more vigorously, for the support of the layers of young workers who are disenchanted with the established workers' parties.

The "workers' party" tactic of [ML leader] Taaffe ... offers the left fakers a new lease of life when what we want to serve on them is a death warrant.

Only revolutionary socialism can meet the challenge of a new generation looking for socialist change.

If left reformist currents emerge from decaying Labourism and Stalinism we must relate to them — not in order to shore up doomed projects of "real Labour," "True Labour" or "Socialist Labour" parties — but to assist the best militants amongst them to make a clean break with reformism. ...

Workers and youth who are being radicalized and will be radicalized by the coming struggles do not need to be dragged through the experience of a party led by the Benns, Livingstones and Scargills of this world ... before they can experience a real revolutionary organization. (*Workers Power*, September 1995.)

But as soon as Scargill made his call for an SLP, WP sang a different tune. In their first response, they wrote that the growing numbers of workers rejecting Labour:

... need a strong, well-organized socialist voice and an organization to organize and lead their resistance. That is why Workers Power welcomes Arthur Scargill's call for discussions on the left to consider the establishment of a Socialist Labour Party. We will participate fully in the process of consultation and debate ... in the run-up to the planned launch of the new party in May 1996. The key question for this debate is, what kind of party should socialists be aiming to establish in May? (December 1995.)

Communists might welcome Scargill's call for an SLP — as an opportunity to expose him and his ilk to a wider audience of workers. But that was not what WP meant. They welcomed Scargill's call for an SLP as an opportunity to take a

Workers Power: Dodging the Tough Questions

Stepping to the head of workers' struggles with gestures of militancy and promises of socialism, the Labourites have betrayed the millions of workers who placed their hopes in them over the years. Left reformists pose a similar threat to the coming struggles of the working class. Thus the question of how to break the working class from reformist misleaders is decisive for revolutionaries today.

The masses of workers will only break from reformist leaders on the basis of their own experience of the class struggle. That is why revolutionaries advocate the united front tactic, whereby they join with the masses of workers and their reformist leaders in struggle in order to put their criticisms of the reformists to the test. As Trotsky explained:

The tactic of the united front still retains all its power as the most important method in the struggle for the masses. A basic principle of this tactic is: "With the masses — always; with the vacillating leaders — sometimes, but only so long as they stand at the head of the masses." It is necessary to make use of vacillating leaders while the masses are pushing them ahead ... And it is necessary to break with them at the right time when they turn from vacillation to hostile action and betrayal. It is necessary to use the occasion of the break to expose the traitorous leaders and to contrast their position to that of the masses. It is precisely in this that the revolutionary essence of the united front policy consists. (Leon Trotsky on Britain, p. 255)

Most of the British left rejects this tactic in favor of a strategy of permanent support to the Labour Party: they refuse to break with Labour even when it has been openly betraying workers' struggles. In their first response to Arthur Scargill's call for the formation of an SLP, the Workers Power group seemed to make this same point, saying that Scargill's call to break from Labour was long overdue:

The real problem is not the premature formation of an SLP. It could even have come too late.

If *Militant* had found the political courage to break with Labour during the struggles in Liverpool in the mid-1980s, and if Arthur Scargill and his allies in the NUM had made the call, tens of thousands could have broken from the grip of Kinnock.

As it is we remain in a period characterized by the legacy of defeats, retreats and sporadic resistance. (Workers Power, December 1995.)

But reader beware — the same criticism can be made of WP, which never broke from Labour during its betrayal of the miners' struggle!

BREAK WITH LABOUR?

Just in case we had somehow missed a significant change in WP's attitude, we wrote to them, challenging them to say when they had ever showed "the political courage to break with Labour "in the mid-1980s." We noted, for example, that "During the miners' strike, wasn't Workers Power saying that the class struggle had to be waged in the unions 'and in the Labour Party'?"

Workers Power printed our letter (January 1996) and

replied by saying that our "sectarian politics" prevented us from seeing the consistency between calling for a class struggle to be waged "in the Labour Party" and the argument for a "break with Labour." WP now claims it had called for a "revolutionary break with Labour" in a passage from their pamphlet on the miners' strike:

"The Bennite left has shown that despite its rhetorical 'left' positions ... faced with the threat of a split or all out war from the Labour right they will pipe down." The pamphlet went on to call for a new revolutionary communist party. ... WP's approach aimed to break tens of thousands away from Labourism in struggle, by pursuing the civil war to the end. (Workers Power, February 1996)

But this is no evidence that WP broke from Labour! WP now says that it had "aimed" to break workers from Labour and that elsewhere it called for the building of a separate revolutionary party. It does not say, nor could it, that WP called on workers to break from Labour and not give it any form of political support.

WP could not find a single statement of theirs to this effect from over the last twenty years because none exists. They "aimed" to break workers from Labour by encouraging them to fight *within Labour* for socialist policies and by tirelessly *voting for Labour* in elections. The problem isn't that WP hasn't said that workers should break from Labour — but that, often in the same breath, they tell workers to continue fighting within Labour and outside it to force it to represent the needs of the working class.

As they wrote during the miners' strike:

In the unions first and foremost — but necessarily and vitally in the Labour Party too — the class fighters must be rallied for a life or death struggle against the class traitors. Then we shall see where the waverers and appeasers stand. This strike has shown the working class doesn't need a "broad church." It needs a mass party of the class struggle. It needs a party dedicated to overthrowing capitalism. ... To this end the militant miners and all their supporters should dedicate themselves in 1985. (Workers Power, January 1985)

WP is formally opposed to the perspective of trying to transform the Labour Party into a revolutionary party, but this is the implication of this statement and many similar ones. WP's wants workers to break from Labour, but they themselves will not do so until the masses of workers have.

Typically centrist, WP is revolutionary in rhetoric but reformist in deed. They continued to support Labour even when it was attacking the working class — for example, when they voted for the Callaghan government in 1979 — and blamed the workers for not being ready to break.

Trotsky condemned such behaviour in strong terms: **Temporary agreements may be made with the reformists whenever they take a step forward. But to maintain a bloc with them when, frightened by the development of a movement, they commit treason, is equivalent to criminal toleration of traitors and a veiling of betrayal. (The Third International After Lenin, p. 129.)**

Workers Power does exactly that, and denounces us — for exposing their cover-up.

step forward *with him* toward building a big revolutionary party (see below).

WP did say that while his call was an "understandable" reaction to Blair's charge to the right, Scargill was "mistaken" in thinking that Labour once had "socialist roots" that could be returned to. But pointing to an "understandable" mistake sounds like a comradely difference of opinion rather than an expression of mortally opposed perspectives — reform versus revolution.

NO RETURN TO "OLD LABOUR"

When workers initially react to Blairism by wanting to return to "old Labour," we recognize their mistake and understand why they think that way — because in the wake of the defeat of past struggles they honestly cannot see an alternative. However, Scargill was until yesterday part of the old Labour apparatus that betrayed those struggles and is wedded to the same reformist politics that led to defeat. Typically, WP fails to distinguish between the honest mistake of workers and the corrupt politics of Scargill, leading revolutionary-minded workers good reason to think that Scargill might correct his error through the course of struggle like the masses of workers will. And, continuing to avoid criticizing Scargill on fundamental questions, WP failed to criticize the poisonous nationalism of Scargill's SLP *Discussion Paper*.

WP took this opportunistically mild attitude toward the SLP because they were preparing to join it and encourage all workers to do the same. From the start they promoted the illusion that the SLP could be turned into a revolutionary party:

Arthur Scargill's announcement of his intention to found a new Socialist Labour Party (SLP) presented enormous potential for socialists in Britain. For the first time in decades, a trade union leader with national influence had issued a call capable of rallying serious forces on the left wing of the labour movement.

Workers Power responded positively, declaring ourselves prepared to engage in such a process with the aim of promoting the formation of an SLP on the firm foundations of a program for the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism and the socialist transformation of society. (*Workers Power*, January 1996.)

By not pointing to the need to politically defeat the Scargill leadership, WP created the illusion that Scargill was moving left and could be won to supporting a revolutionary program. WP could perhaps claim that by these statements they meant that they would oppose Scargill's "mistaken" politics and seek to convince those workers attracted to the SLP that it should adopt a revolutionary program. But that is not what they said, nor is it consistent with their reluctance to criticize Scargill on fundamentals.

WP NO ALTERNATIVE TO MILITANT LABOUR

It took months for WP to state that their aim for the SLP to be a revolutionary party was *not* Scargill's — after Scargill had effectively banned left groups from the SLP and the project appeared moribund. Even then, they avoided saying so in their main article on the SLP, preferring to bury the idea in a separate polemic with the SWP:

They [the SWP] have no rounded alternative to [Scargill's] left reformist vision for the SLP and therefore cannot fight him for the political heart of the project. Only a revolutionary program provides such a means. (*ibid.*)

When WP did attack a reformist perspective for the

SLP, they aimed their fire not at Scargill but at Militant Labour. WP criticized ML's aim of building a reformist "viable weapon" for socialism (as ML used to refer to Labour) and in particular for suggesting Italy's Rifondazione Comunista as a model for the SLP.

But, tellingly, WP did not attack ML on the most important point: that ML supported Scargill's call for an SLP and volunteered to build it. No wonder: Militant Labour wanted to enroll in the SLP and push it to the left; Workers Power wanted to do the same but push it a little further. Thus, just as Scargill threatens the SWP, ML presented WP with a perspective from which they could not differentiate themselves in any concretely meaningful way. No wonder WP considers Militant moving left and worthy of appeals for unity. (*Workers Power*, April 1996).

After another month had gone by in which Scargill had the SLP adopt his reactionary constitution, WP shifted again. They wrote that the way Scargill had established the SLP, pre-purged of Militant and other left groups and on a reformist Labourite program:

... suggests that he has not broken from his old belief in socialism from above: through elections, with mass organizations placing mass pressure on elected MPs. ... Scargill's attitude is in keeping with his whole political method. We are not surprised by it. ... Scargill has created a miniature left reformist party. (February 1996.)

It is heartwarming that WP was not surprised when Scargill was revealed to be the same treacherous bureaucrat he has always been. But we could understand if WP's readers were surprised: after all, WP had only one month earlier told them that Scargill was creating an "enormous potential" to build a revolutionary party. (As we show in the accompanying box, WP often employs this fake "we told you so" hindsight to cover their opportunist adaptation to the Labour Party.)

Why the change? Like ML, WP gave Scargill the opportunity to avoid revolutionary criticism if he would only return the favor by allowing them into his SLP. Once Scargill rejected their advances, WP chose to save face by denouncing him.

But WP has not given up on the SLP turning into the revolutionary party. After discussing the reactionary policies adopted by the SLP at its founding convention and noting that a motion for a clear policy of socialism through revolution got only 10 percent of the vote, WP concluded:

Yet there is a significant minority of the party who see the need to go beyond left reformism and commit the party to the goal of revolution. They need to get organized and continue the campaign for revolutionary policies. They are the great hope for the future of the SLP and of all those who see the need for a mass revolutionary party in Britain. ... One thing is certain: the struggle for the political soul of the Socialist Labor Party has only just begun. (June 1996.)

Precisely wrong! The SLP's founding convention confirmed what should already have been clear: the SLP is a reformist party with an entrenched bureaucratic leadership and no immediate prospects for mass support. Rarely are political lessons more obvious: it is wrong to attempt to advance the revolutionary party from within the SLP. Any worker who previously hoped otherwise should break from the SLP and fight for the revolutionary party outside. The SLP is an obstacle to the building of the authentic revolutionary party which can only be strengthened by the participation and support of revolutionaries.

While revolutionaries believe this policy is correct, it is not an ultimatum. If some workers honestly do maintain the

hope of transforming the SLP, revolutionaries would not ignore them. We would continue to engage them in discussion and common struggle where possible. But unless there is a drastic change in the nature of the SLP, revolutionaries should not do this from within the SLP.

Averaging slightly more than one position on the SLP per issue of their paper, Workers Power is pulling out all stops to prove once again that centrism vacillates. It offers no alternative to workers rejecting Militant-style capitulation to Labour.

Throughout its history, regardless of whether masses of workers have been moving away from Labour — even when Labour was in power and viciously attacking the workers — Workers Power has always called for electoral support. Given its particular left-wing rhetoric, WP is still more likely to tail the development of a new, superficially more radical reformist party than to continue clinging to Labour. But for the time being, following the failure of Scargill's SLP to gain substantial support, WP will continue with Labour.

PAVING THE WAY FOR LEFT LABOURISM

WP has already declared its intention to vote for Blair's Labour in the coming elections; it likewise advocated voting for Labour in the Hemsworth by-election contested by the SLP. WP claims that this is the only way to expose "the illusions that millions of workers have in Labour."

In the meantime, WP calls on workers to join them outside and inside the Labour Party in a fight for "a series of demands that will force a Labour government to act in the interests of the millions of workers it claims to represent." Specifically, WP advocates demands for a wealth tax and "nationalization under workers control" in order to solve unemployment, a minimum wage almost double what Labour is considering, expanded education and health care, millions of new homes and even that Labour "abolish" the House of Lords and the Monarchy! (*Workers Power*, November 1995.)

To raise demands on reformists when workers have no such illusions only serves to create those illusions — as if Labour would ever fight for such policies! In fact WP knows that workers do not hold such illusions. As they wrote to explain why workers did not defend Clause Four:

The thing most Labour-voting workers want now is a Labour government. It is nothing new for them to be prepared to see Labour's policies move right to achieve this. . . . Many Labour activists think that if dropping a set of words, which never achieved anything in practice, will ensure a Labour victory then that's better than another five years of Tory rule. Wider layers of Labour voters have been convinced that nationalization and state socialism are outmoded, and believe that the Labour Party needs a "modern" economic program with a managed market. (April 1995.)

If the masses of workers in Britain today thought that a Labour government would advance their class's struggle, revolutionaries could advocate voting for Labour, going through the experience of electing a Labour government with them in order to prove that Labor will betray. However, the sentiment WP describes expresses the fact that many workers are cynical about their own class's ability to defeat Tory government attacks and so are looking to Labour as a lesser evil, particularly now that Labour has the backing of more sections of the bourgeoisie and middle classes. WP's description of the reasons why workers voted for Labour in Hemsworth confirms this:

After 17 years of Tory rule, most workers continue to see Labour as the best chance of getting rid of this hated government. Despite widespread misgivings about Blair, there is a general feeling that with Labour in office, many of the blows inflicted by the Tories on jobs, services and living standards will be halted, or at the very least cushioned. (March 1996.)

To endorse Labour under these conditions is not to solidarize with struggles of the working class that are bound to collide with their illusions in Labour. Rather, it is to encourage workers' lack of confidence in their class's ability to defeat the attacks from the Tories and the capitalists.

The electoral support for Labour among many workers belies the profound cynicism and distrust in it throughout the working class. A sign of disenchantment was the conference of the Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers Union recently, which voted overwhelmingly against a motion calling for it to "campaign positively" for a Labour government. Alienation from the entire political system is widespread and concentrated among those with the least stake in it: the unemployed, the youth and the racially oppressed. For example, 44 percent of youth (18-25 years) do not vote, not counting those not even registered.

Revolutionaries must face reality squarely and explain to their fellow workers that in all likelihood, there will be no workers' party worth voting for in the coming elections. This makes the need for revolutionary-minded workers to come together to build such a party all the more urgent. And with large numbers of workers holding an explosive rage toward their exploitation and oppression, there is tremendous potential to build a revolutionary leadership. For socialists to encourage a Labour vote might easily confuse the relatively small layer of workers now looking for a revolutionary alternative. And WP's line threatens far worse in the future.

If elected, Blair's Labour government will likely face a mass workers' struggle at some point. If such a struggle is successful, it could rally wider forces to beat back all the attacks on workers and threaten the Blair government. With Labour holding a weak grip on the working class, the capitalists will need a parliamentary diversion to the workers' mass struggles — a left Labour leadership.

While revolutionaries will need to fight such a trap for the struggle, WP's position directly encourages it. By arguing for the need to fight *within* Labour over a program like that cited above, WP sets itself up to direct workers into supporting and joining the Labour Party (to fight to move it left under a new leadership) — just when mass struggles will be showing workers' ability to build a revolutionary alternative.

WP's potential for such treachery was shown when it refused to call for a general strike against the Callaghan government during the 1977 mass struggles against its attacks; WP did not want to threaten a Labour government, preferring to encourage workers to vote *for* Labour. Thus WP adds a more left-wing echo to the SWP's pre-emptive calls to defend Labour against the Tories and push it to the left.

FOR A REVOLUTIONARY PARTY IN BRITAIN!

The rightward drift of Labour and the crisis of its left wing gives those who have placed their hopes for socialism with the Labour Party good reason to be cynical. But for authentic revolutionaries who look to their class, the working class, as the force for revolutionary thought and action, there is reason for enthusiasm and optimism.

Today, the British working class is seeking to regain its

strength after the many defeats inflicted over the last twenty years. Both the SWP and WP expect the class struggles in the coming period to be characterized by isolated economist efforts. But the economic crisis, mass unemployment and the determination of bosses and politicians to deepen the attacks will mean that such struggles will not be able to win as often as in the past. More likely, workers will hesitate to launch struggles without a feeling of power and will more readily respond to opportunities to fight for broad demands that can unite broad numbers of workers.

Until these struggles break out and the real masses of workers enter the struggle, it will be impossible for revolutionaries to win a mass audience. Today, only a relatively small layer of politically advanced workers who hate the Labour Party and are looking for an alternative can be won to building the revolutionary party. They must not be allowed to be confused by the centrist left into thinking that there is some reason to remain loyal to Labourism either by continuing to vote for them and trying to push them to the left, or by building a new left Labourite party like Scargill's SLP. Revolutionaries must raise on their banner clear slogans that express that *Socialist Revolution is the Only Solution* to the workers' needs, and that the central task of all class-conscious workers is to *Build the Revolutionary Party of the Working Class and Re-create the Fourth International*.

GENERAL STRIKE

When the working class does not look to a recognized leadership and is reluctant to launch struggles without a feeling of real social power, slogans of mass struggle are particularly important. Revolutionaries must be sensitive to the peculiarities of each workers' struggle and propose the tactics best suited to immediately advancing each. But a key idea must be the need to spread the struggle and mobilize

the greatest number of workers in pursuit of the working class's needs. That is why revolutionaries in Britain should popularize the idea of the *general strike* in their propaganda. Every major struggle in Britain — from the 1977 Winter of Discontent, through the struggles to defend the coal mines from privatization, to the struggle against the poll tax — has shown the potential and need for a general strike.

The general strike alone solves none of the problems of the class struggle. But at the same time that it answers the basic needs of workers when they begin defensive struggles — unity and power — by mobilizing the entire working class against the capitalists and their government, it clearly poses the question — who leads and who rules?

Focusing their action slogans on the unions, revolutionaries could popularize the idea of *workplace strike committees* and *action councils* to involve the great masses in the struggle, and *workers' defense squads* to defend against the very real threat of police and other reactionary attacks. This advanced level of organization is at first necessary to execute the struggle most effectively, but when reformist leaders betray the struggle, these mass organizations can become the means for continuing the struggle.

Revolutionaries would explain how as a general strike mobilizes the masses and paralyzes the capitalists, these action councils could become organs of working-class power capable of posing a real alternative to the capitalists' state power and the Labour and Tory parties. Any revolutionary aware of the danger of a parliamentary trap for the coming struggles will see the importance of spreading such slogans.

But ultimately, a mobilization of the working class can only be successful if it fights for demands that answer the needs of the great masses of workers, in particular the most oppressed and exploited. Thus, revolutionaries emphasize the need to transcend the partial and economic demands characteristic of trade-union struggles by pointing to the need for class-wide policies like *Jobs for All* through a *Sliding Scale of Hours and a Living Wage*, the *Repudiation of the Capitalist Debt* and the *Expropriation of the Banks and Big Businesses*.

Revolutionaries would explain that a mass struggle for such demands would be able to prove to increasing numbers of workers that capitalism will have to be overthrown by a revolution that smashes the capitalists' state power. A workers' state that establishes a planned economy producing for human need, not profit, can answer the needs of the workers — but only if it is supported by the world socialist revolution which unleashes the productive power of the world economy. In particular, revolutionaries would counterpose key internationalist slogans like that for a *United Socialist States of Europe* and would call for an end to Britain's racist, imperialist immigration controls. It would also oppose the capitalist European Union as well as to no less capitalist "Little Englandism."

Revolutionaries will not hesitate to use elections and parliament to advance their socialist program and expose the reformist leaders and their parliament. But the great mass struggles in the factories and streets will be the birthplace of the authentic communist leadership of the working class. The bankruptcy of Labourite left reformism and centrism shows why revolutionary-minded workers should waste no time in rallying to the banner of genuine Trotskyism.

**New Reformist Parties Are No Solution!
Build the Revolutionary Party of the Working Class —
Re-create the Fourth International!**

REVOLUTIONARY HISTORY

Vol. 6, No. 2/3

Revolutionary Marxism in Britain, Ireland and Russia

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Did the U.S. Aid Bosnia?

Press reports this spring revealed that the Clinton administration, while publicly going along with the U.N.-imposed embargo on arms shipments to combatants in the Yugoslav wars, had looked the other way while shipments of arms got through to the Bosnian government from Iran, Saudi Arabia and other Moslem governments.

The League for the Revolutionary Party has held since the start of the war that the arms embargo was one-sided, since Serbia inherited the large army and arms industry of the former Yugoslavia, while Croatia was easily able to smuggle arms across its borders from its German and Austrian allies. Only Bosnia was significantly affected, preventing it from defending its right to self-determination from the nationalist Serbian and Croatian forces.

We defended real self-determination for Bosnians, in contrast to the imperialists, who wanted a Bosnia armed just enough to stay alive as a tiny pawn; Serbian and Croatian domination would stabilize the region for the imperialist order. Naturally, we supported the demand that imperialism end the arms embargo.

Some on the left argued that demanding an end to this form of imperialist intervention amounted in effect to supporting imperialism, which was allegedly behind the Bosnian secession from Yugoslavia. The new revelations have seemingly strengthened this case.

For example, the ISO's *Socialist Worker* writes:

The arming of Bosnia — and its ally Croatia — was part of a U.S.-led intervention which has fueled ethnic cleansing in the former Yugoslavia and helped to carve up the region between warring nationalist leaders. (April 12.)

The ISO assumes, however, that the U.S. was actually supporting Bosnia's war for independence by arming it. This assumption takes imperialist hypocrisy as good coin.

It is certainly true that imperialism has filthy hands in the Yugoslav wars. Yugoslavia was reduced to penury in the late 1980's by financial pressure from the World Bank and International Monetary Fund; that gave the nationalist demagogues the opportunity to win credibility. There had been considerable working-class resistance to the austerity attacks, until Serbia's strongman Milosevic used Serbian nationalism to derail it. The West encouraged Milosevic to suppress minority nationalities in Kosovo and elsewhere in the name of Yugoslav unity and stability. Then, when it became clear that a united Yugoslavia was impossible, the U.S. sought solutions via division.

Bush and Clinton deplored the genocidal "ethnic cleansing" practiced most egregiously by the Serb nationalists. Throughout the war the U.S. tried to force Bosnia to accept the hopelessness of its cause against better armed enemies (the Bosnian army actually had a numerical advantage) and swallow a partitioned state as the price of defeat.

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DAYTON DEAL BORE IMPERIALIST STAMP

The Dayton agreement signed last fall by the warring parties under U.S. supervision proves the point. Bosnia was divided between a Serb-ruled half and a joint Muslim-Croatian portion, part of a federation dominated by Croatia. Troops of the Western powers were sent to occupy the country, while the finances of the "independent" state were placed in the trusted hands of Western officials.

Dayton ended four years of imperialist squabbling over how to stabilize the region. It was made possible by three military events: the Serb conquest and "cleansing" of the "safe haven" of Srebrenica while U.N. forces turned a blind eye; the Croatian conquest and "cleansing" of the Krajina region, encouraged openly by U.S. diplomats; and the NATO bombing of Bosnian Serb targets. The first two set up compact geographical regions for the partition, while the latter finally forced Milosevic and the Bosnian Serb leaders to the bargaining table.

The LRP opposed imperialist intervention at all times, from the economic blockade of Serbia and the arms embargo against Bosnia to the bombing raids. In the summer of 1995, when the NATO bombing plus Milosevic's capitulation brought the war to an end, we withdrew our military support for the Bosnian side, because their war was no longer for self-determination but for eking out extra pieces in the U.S.-imposed deal. We stood then for the military defeat of NATO by even such thugs as Bosnian Serb leaders Mladic and Karadzic, because any blow against imperialism is better for the proletariat than a NATO victory.

The new revelations offer further proof of imperialism's aims. While the arms embargo had been porous, it had never allowed the Bosnian army (or Bosnian working-class organizations) to obtain the decisive weapons that could have turned the tide of the war. As we wrote last fall, "Some arms got through, but not the heavy weapons that would have balanced supplies [to the Bosnian Serbs] from Serbia proper." (PR 50.) This was in fact confirmed by the recent reports. The *New York Times* wrote that a proposed delivery of surface-to-air missiles from Iran was squelched:

"The deal was not, like the arms shipments, told to us in advance," an American official said. "As soon as we heard about it, we made sure it was stopped."

That is, the U.S. used the U.N. arms embargo to keep decisive weapons from reaching the Bosnian side, while the Serbs and Croats had access to them. Contrary to *Socialist Worker*, it was the *disarming*, not the arming, of Bosnia that helped imperialism "carve up the region between warring nationalist leaders." Thus it was entirely correct to demand an end to the imperialist embargo.

As communists, our chief aim is to unite the workers in a struggle against all the capitalist rulers, imperialism above all. Nevertheless, we understand that the road to class unity often takes detours. Socialists support the right of self-determination of the oppressed — not because we support bourgeois nationalism (we do not, even of the oppressed), but because we want to convince the workers of the oppressed nations that the workers of the oppressors' nations are not their enemy. We want the class issues to become the decisive ones. Those who defended the arms embargo stood on the imperialist side of the class line. ●

Democratic Party Advocates Found 'Labor Party'

by Bob Wolfe

Close to 1400 delegates met in Cleveland in June to proclaim Tony Mazzocchi's Labor Party Advocates the "Labor Party." Despite LPA's failure to attain Mazzocchi's goal of 100,000 members, this not-yet-ready-for-prime-time outfit of union officials and leftist hangers-on apparently feels it has sufficient support within the labor bureaucracy to take this bold step forward — with the permission of the pro-Democratic AFL-CIO leadership, of course.

While the new "party" claims endorsements from unions representing a million members, the convention showed the bureaucratic nature of the organization and the absence of any serious following among the workers. This "Labor Party" is not a product of a mass movement but a reform current within the union apparatus.

If the Labor Party is not based on mass struggles, if it doesn't lead class battles against the capitalists, what interest do revolutionaries have in it? A good question, one which occurred to us often while listening to one speech after another that evaded the fundamental political questions facing the working class. Any serious worker looking for answers to the capitalist crisis, for a real alternative to the barbarism of the system, would have been completely turned off by the reformist claptrap and posturing that dominated in Cleveland.

A LABOR BUREAUCRACY PARTY

At a time when Clinton and the Republicans are squabbling over how to attack the working class, the AFL-CIO endorsement of Clinton is a slap in the face to all workers. It points to the need for a serious fight against the conservative labor bureaucracy which underwent only a facelift with the election of John Sweeney as AFL-CIO president.

The labor bureaucracy defends the interests of capitalism within the working class. They have repeatedly betrayed class struggles, most recently at Caterpillar and Staley in the Illinois "War Zone" conflicts. They have proved themselves unable to defend the basic economic interests of the working class, let alone lead any form of struggle against racism, imperialism, attacks on immigrants and a host of other capitalist assaults.

None of this was discussed in Cleveland. Sweeney's name was absent from the lips of the labor leaders and leftists present. There was no discussion of the crisis of leadership facing the working class. There was no open discussion of the betrayals and sellouts of the AFL-CIO leadership.

Claims by Labor Party supporters that the convention was a step toward building a working-class party independent of the Democrats are belied by reality. What kind of independent labor party can be built without challenging the bureaucracy tied hand and foot to the Democrats? A party that invited former Democratic officials like Jim Hightower and California ex-governor and 1992 presidential aspirant, Jerry ("flat tax") Brown to parade as leading fighters for

workers' interests. A party whose convention chair, OCAW president Robert Wages, conveniently avoided voting against the Clinton endorsement on the AFL-CIO Executive Council.



Former Democratic Party presidential aspirant Jerry Brown at LPA meeting. New 'Labor Party' can't break with capitalist Democrats.

A "labor party" where many of the union delegates hold posts in the Democratic Party without seeing the slightest contradiction.

What made the Cleveland convention so dangerous for working-class fighters is that it attempted to repackage the same dead-end, bureaucratic strategy of class collaboration with phony rhetoric about "a new organizing approach to politics." In reality, the Labor Party represents merely a different tactical approach to carry out the bureaucracy's strategy. Rather than a break with bourgeois politics as usual, the labor party strategy means escalating the trade unions' role as a pressure groups on the Democrats by threatening "independence." Mazzocchi and Wages speak for a wing of the labor bureaucracy that says the unions need to be more independent if they are going to cut deals with the bosses and their parties.

FUSION CANDIDATES?

Thus the Labor Party is another weapon in the hands of the labor bureaucracy. This explains Sweeney's mixed messages about it. Sweeney tolerated Mazzocchi's labor party activity, allowing international unions to participate and endorse the convention in return for the continued pledge by the leaders not to interfere with AFL-CIO support for Clinton and the Democrats. Indeed, Sweeney left open the idea that the labor party is an option labor might pursue down the road as a pressure tactic on the Democrats. He told the *Cleveland Plain Dealer* that it would be better to use the labor party tactic in a non-election year, expressing concern that it would harm the current effort to support Clinton. "Shame on us," he said, "if we start splitting off or distracting our activists." Wages agreed:

If we remain non-electoral for the near future, and have discussions that leave room for fusion candidates, running both on our line and that of the Democrats, I think other unions will be interested. (*The Nation*, July 8.)

As an extension of the politics of the labor bureaucracy, the Labor Party will never win a following among oppressed

workers looking for a real alternative to the capitalist attacks, which hit hardest against Blacks, Latinos, women and immigrants as the most vulnerable sections of the working class. The majority of workers are as turned off by the labor bureaucrats as they are by the bourgeois politicians. Workers don't look to the unions for answers to the problems they face and the Labor Party offers no reason for this to change.

Nevertheless, workers interested in fighting capitalism cannot ignore the labor bureaucracy that holds power over the only mass fighting institutions of the working class in the U.S. The bureaucrats must be defeated, and the power and energy of the trade unions freed from conservative bureaucratism, if the working class is going to stop the bosses' attacks. Dismissing the Labor Party as a pile of reformist crap is insufficient.

Workers must fight every manifestation of bureaucratic power, including the Labor Party that offers the labor leadership a more left-sounding fallback position should their Democratic Party strategy collapse. Workers should not underestimate the ability of the bureaucracy to engage in even more serious left maneuvers to keep future working class explosions from moving beyond the limits of the capitalist system.

With this in mind, observers from the League for the Revolutionary Party went to Cleveland to state the case for the revolutionary party and against a reformist labor party. Our pamphlet, *The New "Labor Party": Democratic Party Advocates*, shocked many delegates with the accuracy of its analysis of the leaderships real intentions. We showed that revolutionaries are not content just to denounce our reformist opponents but are prepared to engage in political combat in defense of working-class interests.

BUREAUCRACY RULES

In the weeks leading up to the convention, Mazzocchi set the tone for what was to come when he warned the left that he would silence anyone who pushed socialist politics at the microphones. From the beginning, the bureaucrats at the podium asserted their authority, which went unchallenged by the left groups who intervened as labor party loyalists on their best behavior — Labor Militant, Socialist Organizer, Solidarity, International Socialist Organization, Socialist Action, to name a few. Socialism itself was a taboo word. The left was so docile that they couldn't even get up the nerve to attack Sweeney and the AFL-CIO leadership.

The New "Labor Party": Democratic Party Advocates?

Written for the founding convention of Labor Party Advocates' new party, this pamphlet accurately called the shots on the LPA leaders' real intentions and exposed the capitulations of their "far left" supporters. It includes an analysis of Trotsky's labor party slogan, explaining why today's "Labor Party" has nothing to do with building the revolutionary working-class party that is needed.

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Every attempt by the "socialist" groups to nudge the convention to the left was quickly shot down. Mazzocchi and Wages had the votes, especially given the weighted voting in favor of the international unions. A feeble attempt to include statements opposing support for the bosses' parties was dropped when it became clear it had little support among the delegates. Indeed, it was understood that many of the unions represented at the convention would continue to support the Democrats in the elections. *Workers World* was told by AFGE President John Sturdivant that "his union's endorsement does not mean it is splitting from the Democrats or from the AFL-CIO's commitment to Clinton." So much for independent political action at this convention!

The only serious challenge to the leadership came when one of the internationals, the International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union, broke ranks on the question of non-electoralism. The ILWU did not challenge the AFL-CIO commitment to Clinton but merely proposed that Labor Party chapters would be allowed to field candidates at the local level where possible.

NO CHALLENGE TO SWEENEY

Despite the ILWU's conciliatory tone, Wages and Mazzocchi panicked at the idea of any resolution that would have put the Labor Party at odds with the electoral strategy of the AFL-CIO. Wages attempted to shut off debate but was forced to back down. It was one thing to silence the small left groups, it was another to smack down one of the international unions. After a recess, Wages announced a suspension of the rules and allowed an hour of debate.

What followed was a strange bit of irony. While the leftists in the back of the room argued for pursuing an electoral strategy, the bureaucrats and their supporters at the front attacked the ILWU resolution from the left, arguing that what was needed was mass action and organizing!

In reality, the leadership's talk of the need to build a mass movement was just that — talk. Nothing scares the bureaucrats more than mass action. For five years LPA avoided intervening in the class struggle, failing to lead a single working-class fight. While Wages and Mazzocchi are more willing to play with mobilizing workers than most union officials, they have no intention of leading a rank and file rebellion against the AFL-CIO tops. Absent without leave during the Staley struggle as well as others, Mazzocchi and Wages have proved they will subordinate the interests of workers for the sake of unity among the bureaucrats.

At the convention itself, Wages responded to a call for a national march to defend Detroit newspaper strikers by declaring he would bring the proposal up to Sweeney and the other international presidents. There was never a hint that the Labor Party would demand action or that it was ready to mobilize workers to march on Detroit, with or without Sweeney's support. Despite all the talk of mass action, the convention was distinguished by the absence of proposals for any such thing.

The real meaning of the talk of mass action and non-electoralism was revealed by Carl Finamore, formerly a leader of Socialist Action and now a Mazzocchi flunkey. In typical left-cynical fashion, Finamore warned that the labor party movement has come this far only because it has not challenged the AFL-CIO leadership — and that it was necessary to continue this course. Labor Party non-electoralism really means non-interference with labor's pro-Democratic strategy. While a "recovering leftist" like Finamore no doubt

believes in the need to mobilize workers, he nevertheless used the argument for "mass action" as a cover for adapting to the Sweeney leadership.

But underneath the opportunist rhetoric about mass action, Mazzocchi and the left agree on electoralism. As a reformist opposed to revolutionary politics, he believes workers can gain real power only through elections. For Mazzocchi and the Labor Party, the purpose of work among the masses is to build an electoral base. "Our organizing approach to politics will recognize that electoral action comes only after recruiting and mobilizing workers with sufficient collective resources to take on an electoral system dominated by corporations and the wealthy," they write.

Mazzocchi realizes that for now, in the absence of class motion or mass support, the Labor Party is too weak to challenge the AFL-CIO policy. Rather than directly oppose the pro-Democratic strategy, he accepts keeping the Labor Party a non-threatening pressure group on the bureaucrats.

WOMEN'S RIGHTS SILENCED AGAIN

The utter subservience to the bureaucracy reached a low point in the debate over the party program's health care plank, which delicately omitted any reference to abortion. Instead it called for "Informed choice and unimpeded access to a full range of family planning and reproductive services for men and women."

In case anyone missed the point, speakers for the program made clear that they opposed any explicit reference to abortion, arguing that using the word would drive people away. This was refuted by the observation that the Democratic Party, supported by the unions, has an abortion plank in its platform. And now even Bob Dole is softening his anti-abortion rhetoric in preparing to meet the electorate. But the convention soundly rejected an amendment by the California Nurses Association that said straightforwardly, "The Labor Party supports safe, legal abortion and believes it is a woman's private decision."

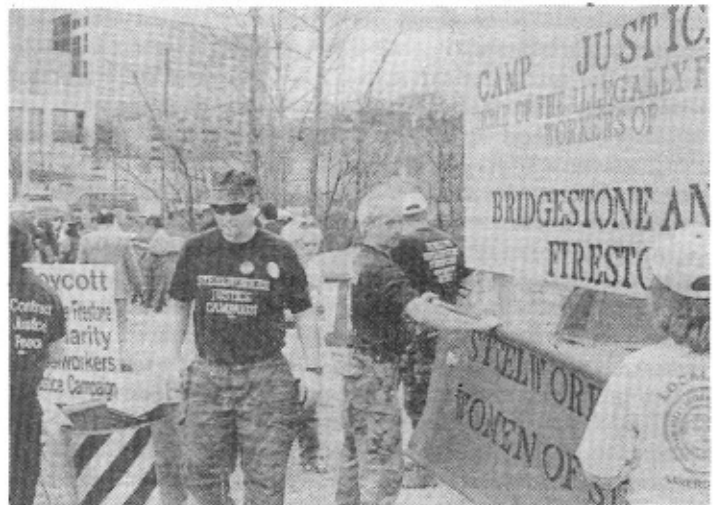
It is not fear of losing the mass of workers but rather of confronting the conservative bureaucrats and the "Reagan Democrat" wing of the labor aristocracy that made the Labor Party adopt a cowardly line to the right of the Democrats. Incredibly, some of the fake leftists supported this reactionary maneuver. Jane Slaughter of Labor Notes sided with the leadership, saying that she "assumed" they knew what they were doing in wording the platform. Others tried to argue that the plank was clearly pro-abortion; some even claimed that "unimpeded access" automatically meant free abortion. In reality, "informed choice" can mean many things that

interfere with women's rights: the 24-hour waiting periods some states require, mandatory counseling, parental consent for teenagers, notification and/or consent of the father, etc.

At a time when abortion rights are under attack, when clinics are bombed and health workers shot and killed, the Labor Party's failure to stand for a fundamental working-class need showed the pro-bureaucratic mentality much of the left caves in to.

REVOLUTION VS. REFORM

Somehow the convention did find the courage to oppose the bombings of Black churches. But the platform gave no real answers to fundamental questions like racism against



Steelworkers protest after long, bitter losing strike against Bridgestone-Firestone. Labor Party fiddles as workers burn.

Blacks and Latinos, oppression of women and gays, and the anti-immigrant chauvinism of both major capitalist parties. Instead of clear positions defending abortion rights, urging armed self-defense against police repression, demanding open borders and no immigration restrictions, it offered generalities against bigotry and discrimination that would satisfy any Clinton supporter.

As to the role of the United States as the leading imperialist power, whose corporations and banks superexploit workers across the globe, the Labor Party platform is silent except for opposing "anti-labor regimes that violate human rights." (What else exists in the world today?). It does say it would "insure adequate national defense," thereby endorsing the standard euphemism for imperialist militarism and interventions abroad.

The tragedy of the Cleveland convention is that the working class does need an independent mass party. But not one that defends capitalism in any form. Serving up poverty, joblessness and overall misery, the capitalist system well deserves to be overthrown. Our slogan, *Proletarian socialist revolution is the only solution!*, points to the need for the working class to smash capitalism and take political power into its own hands.

Workers need a revolutionary working-class party, a section of a genuine communist international. Its solution would be to expropriate the capitalist banks and corporations and organize a planned economy with jobs for all, a sliding scale of hours and an escalating scale of wages to divide the necessary work among all available workers while protecting our standard of living — and a state run by the working class in the interest of all the exploited and oppressed. ●

Fund Appeal

The LRP's numbers and overseas activities have been growing slowly, but the fund at the disposal of our members cannot keep up with our needs.

Our publications are priced below their cost of production to encourage working-class people to read them. We also distribute many copies to superexploited workers abroad who cannot afford to buy them.

As a working-class organization with modest resources, we must count on the help of readers and friends. Please send whatever you can afford to: Socialist Voice, P.O. Box 3573, New York, NY 10008.

Election

continued from page 1

socialist revolution can solve the crisis and put an end to the attacks.

3) Counter the argument that the working class is too weak to do anything but choose a lesser evil. Workers as a class have tremendous power to change society, but it is not in the voting booth.

"LESSER" EVIL BORROWS FROM GREATER

The labor bureaucracy and the top reformist Black and Latino leaders insist that we have to keep Clinton in office to stop the more conservative Dole and the Congressional Republicans. But in fact Clinton has stabbed in the back the working class and oppressed people who got him elected in 1992, when he presented himself as the candidate of the people. (See our article "Wall Street Populism" in *Proletarian Revolution* 43.) No wonder more people than usual, Blacks especially, were convinced not to bother voting in 1994, while some white workers turned to the Republicans when the Democrats failed to deliver on bread-and-butter promises.

Clinton's first term has been a watershed: for the first time a Democratic president has stood overtly for austerity rather than reforms. In this campaign, the difference between the Republicans and the Democrats is at an historic minimum: the Republicans' chief complaint is that Clinton is stealing their conservative program and allegedly lying that he will victimize workers more than he actually means to!

As a *Wall Street Journal* commentator said,

Lately, Mr. Clinton has been moving so fast to the right that he's beating Mr. Dole to the spot. He declared his opposition to same-sex marriage before the Kansan could make it an issue. ... Who needs the Christian Coalition when Bill Clinton is around? (May 24.)

Clinton more easily speaks out of both sides of his mouth. Unlike Dole, when necessary he can point to all the programs that he has cut less than the Republicans wanted. This gives his loyal followers like Jesse Jackson and AFL-CIO President John Sweeney the opportunity to paint his attack as a *defense* of labor, Blacks, Latinos or women. Clinton represents a softer wing of the attackers on some issues, but he is no part of the defense.

For decades, left liberals and pseudo-socialists have urged workers and oppressed people to vote for the lesser evil against the right. With the left in its back pocket, this policy enabled the Democratic Party to move increasingly to the right. Thus we now have Clinton, Wall Street's beloved populist, with a program more reactionary than Nixon's.

(Soon they will tell us we have to vote for Buchanan to stop David Duke! After all, the German lesser evilists in 1933 supported General von Hindenburg to stop Hitler — and then Hindenburg brought in Hitler to run the government...)

This year's campaign is a classic game of hard cop/soft cop. Clinton stands high in the polls because he demands a bit less blood than the Congressional Republicans. But which cop is really the lesser evil? In reality they work as one team.

Imagine for a moment that the old soft-cop scam didn't exist and that Gingrich's entire program had been passed, not just the large chunk of it approved by Clinton; there would have been a mass eruption in response by this time. But the explosive reaction has been bottled up so far by the soft-cop

tactic. And the net effect is that the capitalist steam-roller has accomplished most of its immediate goals. If Clinton triumphs on the basis of working-class — including Black and Latino — support, then the road will be open for the attack to go much further.

MEN IN WHITE DOWN SOUTH, IN BLUE UP NORTH

The dirty laundry list of attacks backed by both Clinton and the Republicans makes it increasingly hard to cling to illusions that the soft cop offers a better deal. Their joint method is very often racist, and barely hidden at that. And this comes at a time when the Black communities face a constant threat of violence and death from cops and other racists, on top of every other indignity society offers.

Examples of the Democrat/Republican attack include:

- Scapegoating Blacks through crime bills. Clinton, like the Republicans, uses crime as a racist code word for Black men. He proselytized for "three strikes" laws which impose mandatory sentences of 25 years to life. His anti-terrorism bill reduces federal appeals for death-row prisoners, ensuring more executions of prisoners who are disproportionately Black and Latino, and facilitates deportations of immigrants.

- Using welfare "reform" to blame Black women for poverty. Clinton topped his own call for "ending welfare as we know it" by enthusiastically supporting Governor Thompson's notorious "Wisconsin Works" bill. In all, his administration has granted 37 states 60 waivers from federal rules. He clearly stands for forcing welfare recipients into dead-end minimum and even sub-minimum wage jobs.

- Beefing up repression. Clinton's sole answer to the epidemic of police violence against Black youth has been — more cops and jails! He recently upped the ante on Dole with a call for a curfew on all (read especially Black) youth.

- Adding to the chauvinist anti-immigrant hysteria. A recent Clinton campaign ad matches George Bush's "Willie Horton" smear in vileness. (See article on page 40.)

All this poisoning of the atmosphere makes it no accident that the wave of Black church burnings has crested during Clinton's term. For example: "In South Carolina, two church torchings occurred soon after Klan rallies. At one of these, Klan speakers told the crowd that black churches were where blacks were taught how to get on the dole." (*Economist*, June 15.) Moreover, when hundreds of FBI, ATF and state agents have been interrogating Black ministers and parishioners, racists get the message that Blacks are habitual criminals. Clinton's 18-month delay before offering a sympathetic response is another signal Klan types understand.

The coded messages that encourage arson in the South and killings by cops in the North come not just from random racists in the dregs at the bottom of society but from the scum at the top. And both kinds of incidents are occurring at an escalating rate in the run-up to the elections.

ECONOMY LOOKING GOOD?

Four years ago Clinton promised "change, not the status quo." He meant it — he just didn't say he meant change for the worse. His job creation promises, for example, went down the drain in less than a year. He claims to have achieved low unemployment, but this masks the reality of high part-time employment as well as workers' holding down two or three jobs. Any microscopic improvement in wages for some sectors has come as a result of major losses of health benefits.

In his first term, Clinton carried out several rounds of budget-slashing, making bigger cuts in health care, welfare,

education and other public services than the Republicans before him. He supports privatization of social services, especially when it means busting public service unions, while his record on actually opposing mass layoffs by corporations is zero. He directly oversaw the layoffs of more than 100,000 federal workers, while he never says a word supporting strikes to defend jobs, working conditions, wages or health care benefits in either the public or private sector.

His record on actively supporting even a single piece of limp "pro-labor" legislation is again zero. Fittingly, his campaign kicked off when he held government workers and services hostage over Christmas (together with the Congressional Republicans who got the lion's share of the blame).

He did not let up when the AFL-CIO endorsed him unequivocally this spring. Having bloodied the unions with NAFTA, Clinton routinely discusses mass layoffs and lower wages as "facts of life" his policies supposedly have nothing to do with.

PINOCCHIO'S PROMISES

Deliberately refusing to fight for a hefty minimum wage raise in 1993 when he had a Democrat-run Congress, Clinton grandstanded for it this year to give labor bureaucrats something to crow about in their feeble "America Needs a Raise" sloganeering. And quite minimum it is, too: a paltry 90 cents over two years, keeping millions well below the poverty line. And there is still no reason to think he even favors that. As *Business Week* put it in an article aptly entitled "Pinocchio for President":

Clinton is perfectly happy to see the minimum wage stalled in the Republican-controlled Congress. . . . Clinton prefers pounding the GOP for failing to pass a pay hike to actually seeing low-wage workers get a raise. . . . "From a purely political standpoint," says one Administration strategist, "we would rather have the issue." (July 8.)

Violating his major campaign promise of 1992, Clinton presided over the skyrocketing costs of ever worsening health care, a stick with two dirty ends which employers have successfully stuck workers with. No wonder, given Clinton's financial attachment to the health insurance industry. (At this Kodak moment, of course, he calls for a kinder, gentler capitalism where laid-off workers can transfer their health insurance to their new jobs — assuming they have jobs and can pay for insurance themselves!) And there are three million more people with no health insurance now than when Clinton took office.

TIED TO CORPORATIONS AND CAPITAL

One union activist saw the Department of Labor led by the supposedly pro-labor Robert Reich turn its back on blatant union-busting efforts that destroyed an SEIU organizing campaign in California. He observed:

Our guy Sweeney now runs the AFL-CIO, so the theory is we've got to play ball with the big boys, with the White House. . . . [But] the words we're handed by the White House are cheap. They know in the end we're going to use our money to get them re-elected. But what do they tell the C.E.O.'s in private? Their contributions can just as easily go to the Republicans. What do Clinton and Reich have to offer them to get their support? (*The Nation*, May 27.)

These suspicions are right. All bourgeois politicians are in hock to the corporations, reflecting the fact that they serve the bourgeois class. Clinton and Dole, even more than most, are notorious for determining policies by who pays them. As

Newsweek put it, "In the Clinton-Dole universe, you rarely hesitate to help a business, especially when its CEO contributes to your campaign." (April 8.)

THE REAL ECONOMIC OUTLOOK

The bourgeoisie is worried about *its* economic health, not ours. As *Fortune* magazine put it:

Given all the positive forces out there, this may well be a market on its way to 10,000. But given the insanities that are also appearing, it won't get there without a confidence-shattering crash somewhere along the way. (April 15.)

The bourgeoisie's concerns are justified even more than they say. Marxists know that capitalism is in its epoch of monopoly, imperialism and decay. Its escalating international instability, its unprecedented economic inequality, are signs of decadence. (For a full explanation, see our book *The Life and Death of Stalinism*.)

Now that the crisis has resurfaced, the imperialists' inability to grant concessions to workers is causing worldwide political instability — at a time when the downfall of the Soviet Union was supposed to have ended Great Power rivalries and created a "New World Order" under unchallenged U.S. hegemony. U.S. military power is unmatched, and that gives it an edge over imperialist rivals in extracting profits, notably from Middle East oil. However, despite zigzags, its economic leadership is fading: for example, the U.S.'s share of foreign investment holdings fell from over 50 percent in 1971 to barely 25 percent in 1994. Even though the bourgeoisie doesn't desire it, trade war always looms on the horizon.

The former balance of power between the U.S. and the USSR no longer exists. The U.S. bourgeoisie has no firm or coherent foreign policy to secure world stability. Rather it approaches each conflict with temporary band-aids and crossed fingers. No wonder Clinton wants to avoid foreign policy as an issue in the campaign. At this juncture the bourgeoisie seeks to preserve stability at home and abroad — while explosions lie just under the surface on every continent.

Instability within nations plus international rivalries make large investments difficult. India, for example, yesterday looked like the ideal haven for investment, until the rightist electoral victory highlighted its political fragility. South Africa teeters on the brink. Defaulting economies like Mexico two years ago threaten to start a chain reaction and bring down the whole house of cards. And it's not just the "third world": in the past half year, France came close to a national general strike, Canada had a series of local ones, and now Germany's powerful working class is stirring — all despite treacherous leadership and predominantly reformist consciousness.

U.S. capitalism needs more investment at home, but it insists on low wages. How to achieve this without triggering a working-class rebellion is the problem. The answer has been to rely on the labor bureaucracy (see below). But anger is boiling underneath. Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan is just one of many worried bourgeois spokesmen. He warned Congress a year ago that income inequality in the U.S. could become "a major threat to our society." (*Wall Street Journal*, July 20, 1995.)

THE BOURGEOISIE'S ELECTORAL CHOICES

Before the proliferating White House scandals took some wind out of his sails in late spring, Clinton appeared to be on course toward victory against Dole. He had proved that a "new Democrat" could sock it to the working class, especially Blacks and Latinos, as well as any Republican. This

greatly boosted corporate confidence in him.

In an unstable world, the bourgeoisie is by nature a hesitant class. It knows what the working class is capable of once it stands on its feet. As of now the electoral process is a means to test how to proceed against the workers without incurring the explosion they have avoided for so long. Clinton is the bourgeoisie's favorite now because of his flexibility.

There is an historic division of labor between Republicans and Democrats. The ruling class is tiny. If the masses were united it would easily be overpowered; hence the necessity for a populist disguise. The two capitalist parties pretend to speak for "the people" — the Republicans primarily for the petty bourgeoisie and parts of the white middle class and labor aristocracy, the Democrats for the bulk of the working class, including Blacks and most Latinos, as well as liberal middle-class professionals.

DEMOCRATS' RESPONSIBILITY

The Democrats have the bigger job, the chief responsibility for fine-tuning the class divisions. The starting point is to never refer to the working class as such. The main sectors discussed are "labor" and "Blacks," reflecting the powerful impact of their struggles. Of course, the divisive labeling distorts the real relations — Black workers, for example, are a critical part of "labor," both in the narrow sense of union membership and the wider sense of the working class as a whole, most of which isn't in unions. Within "labor," Black workers in the 1970's played leading roles in workplace and union rebellions that had great potential. As well, the Black struggles of the 1960's inspired other struggles, including labor strikes and battles for Latino rights and women's rights, at home and abroad.

But the terminological divide does reflect profound chasms within the working class. The labor aristocracy is a layer of better-off workers that sees itself as having a stake in capitalism. This is the layer the pro-capitalist bureaucrats rely on and cater to. Thus "labor" has become identified as a narrow "special interest" group composed of union bureaucrats and their base in the skilled trades and high seniority workers rather than the laboring masses as a whole.

The long-lasting and deepening divisions in the working class have had profound consequences. At this point, every sector is enormously demoralized. The Los Angeles rebellion of 1992 shook up the ruling class, but its effect was temporary; it led to no significant change after Clinton replaced Bush. (See "Depression Election" in *PR* 42.) There is now no big struggle or even immediate expectation of one.

In articles, leaflets, meetings, demonstrations and strikes, the League for the Revolutionary Party has stressed that leadership is the central problem facing our class. The electoral season shows how right we have been. If it weren't for the battery of betrayals by its critical leaderships, both labor and Black leaders having sunk to new lows, the working class would not be under the gun as it is today.

MYTH OF INTEGRATIONISM

Many articles in this magazine have been devoted to exposing the betrayals of Black leaders from Jackson to Louis Farrakhan. We explained that Jackson in the 1980's had discredited himself by first pretending to stand for Black independence and then delivering the masses' votes to the Democrats — who then squashed the hopes Jackson raised. The myth of integrationism and winning Black equality through the Democratic Party stood exposed, and Blacks

interest in voting shot down.

Farrakhan, using his image as an outsider, an angry rebel against the white power system, stepped into the leadership vacuum. His Million Man March last fall promised a new force for Black unity and Black assertion. But as we warned in *PR* 50:

It was no accident that the racist white capitalist politicians liked the message of the march and endorsed its goals, even though they decried the messenger. The ruling class liked the march because it was a diversion of the struggle for Black liberation and a safety valve for the justified and explosive anger of the ghetto masses.

Our article went on to point out that the march agenda went right along with this agenda, endorsing the family values rhetoric that blames single Black mothers and Black "attitude," criminality and culture. Farrakhan made voter registration a centerpiece of the march and persuaded Democratic Party activists like Jackson to join him on the platform; the "unity" achieved that day was acceptance of the basic racist approach of capitalism.

BLACK MISLEADERS' MIDDLE-CLASS BIAS

As Paul Robeson Jr. commented in a recent analysis: **The [Million Man] March also revealed an undeniable contradiction between the interests of the Black middle class and the Black working class and poor. The ... values, goals and priorities of the March were middle-class ones: primary emphasis on entrepreneurship, narrow reliance on self-help, excessive focus on individualism and failure to fight for the expansion of the public sector economy.**

This focus runs counter to the interests of the great majority of African Americans ... For 30 years, most of the Black middle class has abandoned the interests of the working class and poor in exclusive pursuit of its own maximum advancement. The new Black nationalism, which has become so vocal in the Black community, serves to cover up this political betrayal and to obscure the absence of substantive Black leadership. ("The Crisis of Black Leadership," *City Sun*, June 19-25.)

Robeson is right to identify the nationalist Black leaders as middle-class, as well as the integrationists. But he does not conclude that what is needed is for Black workers to reject middle-class leadership and to fight back and shape their own destiny. Instead he says the Black middle class should return to liberalism and pressure the capitalist state to be the benefactor of poor Blacks.

That the Black leadership, both nationalist and integrationist wings, did not draw the line against the bipartisan racist "welfare/crime" attacks, clearly designed to push back Blacks as a people, is not just a moral failure but evidence of their class nature. It was a line that no serious Black leadership could have let the government cross. But instead of rallying to battle, middle-class Black leaders hastened to disidentify with the Black majority. "We're OK, we're not on welfare or in jail," they almost shouted.

The Black leaders drew a line of defense only over affirmative action, once again exposing their middle-class nature and the base they're really concerned about. Affirmative action must be defended. But these programs, most of them benefiting only a small layer, were allowed to shrivel away years ago, when the Democrats joined the anti-quota bandwagon, ending any hopes for enforcement.

(In this, the Black leadership mirrors the middle-class women's leadership. Also backing Clinton to the hilt, NOW

virtually ignored his attacks on welfare from the beginning, conveniently choosing to focus on abortion, and now affirmative action, exclusively; see PR 42 for background.)

What followed the Million Man March was, predictably, a total letdown. Farrakhan's initial threats of independence turned into pale attempts to organize committees for voter registration. With no follow-up possible, Farrakhan moved back a bit from the U.S. political scene in order to regain his necessary pariah status. His problem is to show that he can get out the vote for Clinton without tainting himself, Jackson-style, by directly pumping for the Democrats.

Jackson stumps for Clinton with a standard line: "Clinton is not everything we'd want him to be but . . ." Farrakhan, hoping to win back an angrier, more disenfranchised, layer, has to regularly berate Clinton's attacks on "criminals" in *The Final Call*. But he has no alternative and can only strain unsuccessfully to bridge the gap.

RECORD OF RETREAT

The intensification of attacks on Blacks and the raids on immigrant workers couldn't happen if not for the betrayals of the trade union leaders — of both their own members and the working class at large. That is because the union leaders control the only mass organizations of the working class. Although actual membership is in decline, union workers operate key industries and services that can make capitalism run — or not run. And their political hold over the class is far greater than their membership rolls.

But the union leaders have no answers to the anti-working class assault; they seem to know only how to kill the few strikes they can't fend off in the first place. A graphic example was the recent strike at the General Motors parts plant in Dayton, Ohio. The strike was undeniably effective, rapidly choking production. Faced with either moving the struggle forward or backwards, fearful of spontaneous wildcats, the UAW settled for an outsourcing deal which the strike was meant to prevent. Unwilling to escalate mass action, the leaders made an otherwise inexplicable sellout deal and retreated.

Union members are angry but are far from a militant mass today. Nevertheless, recent years have seen signs that anger can turn into strike action. First came Hormel in the mid-80's, then Caterpillar and Staley workers in the 90's were so fed up with plant conditions that many preferred even long strikes with dismal prospects to the alternative of a return to work. These few exceptions to the rule within U.S. labor point to a potential problem for the labor bureaucracy in confronting the ranks.

UAW President Yokich has already broadcast signals of his intention to sell out over the Big Three auto industry contract this fall. But it won't be so easy. Many autoworkers, especially those fed up with forced overtime, are quite ready to strike if given the opportunity. Even wildcats are hardly ruled out, as Lordstown showed this past spring. The big question is: can a once powerful union like the UAW, a central arena of struggle for Black workers as well as white, be brought to its knees by its own craven leadership?

The stakes are high. The bosses' hands are immeasurably

strengthened by the knowledge that the contracts expire only weeks before the elections. In the minds of the UAW officials, this rules out any strike lest it weaken the Democrats' election prospects.

Democrats and the UAW tops habitually collaborate to suppress even the hint of militancy. The Black Democratic Mayor of Flint, Michigan, Woodrow Stanely, stated publicly that Buick would leave Flint altogether if the New Directions opposition in the UAW, Dave Yettaw, was re-elected local president. (*Labor Notes*, July 1996.) This confluence of local Democrats and the UAW international to pre-emptively squash militancy — however muted it is in the hands of New Directions — echoes the collaboration between Democratic



AFL-CIO chief John Sweeney at Wall Street rally asked why profits are up when wages are down? That's why, John.

Mayor Dennis Archer and the News Guild bureaucrats in Detroit in squelching picket militancy early in the newspaper strike.

If the UAW pushes through a deal that enables more outsourcing and weakens union rights in other ways, there will be terrible consequences, especially given the massive hiring plans announced for the auto industry in the near future. Whether the new hires will be union members, and what that will even mean, is yet to be determined by the class struggle.

The same pro-Clinton chokehold threatens to kill off the Detroit newspaper strike for good. Sweeney & Co. have blown a lot of smoke over the Detroit strike, first promising major support (as they did to the Staley workers whom they quickly stabbed in the back). In May Sweeney sauntered into Detroit for a "town hall" meeting called "to hear poignant stories of strikers who once made \$85,000 a year, now reduced to living on \$55 a week." (*AFL-CIO News*, June 10.)

Sweeney "challenged" the capitalists at a June 6 rally in New York:

Answer this, Wall Street. If corporate profits are up 200 percent and executive compensation is up 400 percent, why are working family incomes down 12 percent? (*New York Times*, June 7.)

Wall Street knows the answer: profits are up *because* wages are down. Every time there is a rise in employment rates (which could lead to higher wages), the stock market shudders; when mass layoffs are announced, brokers rejoice.

Sweeney thinks it's the capitalists' job to be generous to workers. But Wall Street also knows there's a real class struggle going on: they gain from workers' pain.

Sweeney's point, as in his entire "America Needs a Raise" campaign, is that workers are victims; the labor "movement" can help only by appealing harder for charity from the corporations and by asking Democrats to tell the bosses to treat us nicer. In Detroit this strategy fits in with the domination of the strike by the same corporate campaign/boycott line that killed the Staley struggle.

Nevertheless, Sweeney has a problem in Detroit. Last March, the Detroit Labor Council unanimously urged Sweeney to call a national labor Solidarity Day to support the Detroit strike, echoing the national labor marches in Washington in 1981 and 1991. There has been no reply. The last thing Sweeney or Yokich want is masses of workers pouring into Detroit before an election and a UAW contract!

THE WORKING CLASS AND THE ELECTION

Workers today feel angry but also hopeless, a false sense that has been imposed on them by all the betrayals of past struggles. In such an atmosphere, a small group of revolutionaries cannot force a struggle into being. But because of the anger and underlying combativity of layers of the working class, such struggle is inevitable. We cannot predict exactly when the explosion will take place, nor whether it will initially take the form of a union or workplace rebellion or a community-initiated riot against police brutality. How to prepare for it is the key.

In the current atmosphere of division and despair, the way forward is far from obvious. An important layer of revolutionary-minded workers, especially Black and Latino youth, see the need for definitive political actions and answers; but unity of the working class and revolutionary goals seem remote. First, the majority of people they know, people who should be interested in action and politics, are instead extremely wary of both politics and calls to action. (This is understandable as a reaction to so many past betrayals.)

Second, the phenomenon of workers who have radicalized in a racist, reactionary direction, most recently under the banner of Buchanan, adds to fears that white workers are hopelessly racist and chauvinist and that prospects for a class-wide struggle are questionable. The actual number of workers rallying to Buchanan was small, but many more felt he at least understood their anger at NAFTA, corporate downsizing and layoffs. After all, workers who once had the "best" jobs, from Caterpillar to McDonnell Douglas are now out on the streets, treated like disposable garbage and replaced by technology or lower wage non-union workers. Even "professionals" like many of the Detroit newspaper strikers were cast out and beaten by cops on the picket lines.

FEARFUL OF BUCHANAN

The mainstream bourgeoisie, both Republican and Democratic, trembled when it saw the explosive anger Buchanan was riding on — despite the fact that they stoke up racism and national chauvinism themselves. Why are they so wary of Buchanan? First, they want the working class to believe that the economy is doing well and will do better if enough sacrifice is made; Buchanan was tapping into profound economic insecurities rather than assuaging them. Second, the ruling class doesn't welcome any movement that threatens stability; they prefer passive followers, not "peasants with pitchforks." In particular, they want no movement that resonates among workers against government policies like NAFTA or against corporate downsizing and layoffs.

The majority of workers as well as the middle class were

turned off by Gingrich's "Contract with America." Politicians were interfering with "their" programs like Social Security and Medicare, not just plaguing the usual scapegoats of welfare, crime and immigration. Budget-cutting rhetoric was approved as long as it attacked "liberal" programs that "don't work anyway". But that led to nothing decisive, certainly not the ballyhooed "revolution." Balanced budget promises were no longer enough to divert attention from the mainstream Republicans and Democrats' obvious allegiance to capital. It was time to start taking on the big corporations too. Buchanan did this in the safest way possible, under the heading of "America First" and an anti-foreigner campaign.

The significance of Buchananism went far deeper than the actual numbers of workers who bought his line. It showed that in the absence of a working-class leadership that could truly represent the interests of our class by linking the fights against NAFTA, cutbacks and layoffs to the bosses' racism, chauvinism and imperialism, many white workers will polarize toward hard-right solutions. Neither Clinton nor Dole can hold them back, or keep them in the middle-of-the-road wasteland where there is no firm answer to anything.

Political and media discussion of the parties' need to win back the alienated "swing vote" has concentrated on the plight of the labor aristocrats and how to win them back to the center. Little attention is openly paid to the Black vote, because the bourgeoisie needs to downplay the power of Blacks in this society. The bias is blatant, especially since the Democrats cannot win without a decisive Black vote in the South and in major cities.

FEARFUL OF MASSES

In 1992 Clinton won on the anti-Republican vote of both whites and Blacks. But after two years, Blacks sat out the vote in large numbers (along with dissatisfied sections of whites). His strategy now is to stoke up the fear of Republicans among Blacks while giving the most minimal, token concessions to Black concerns — a big show of "sympathy" over the death of Black entrepreneur and politician Ron Brown and his delayed displeasure over the burnings of Black churches are two examples.

Another effort, of no small importance, is to use the Sweeney-style labor bureaucracy to churn out the vote — including among the large number of Black public employees, as well as Latinos. Clinton says he, like the Republicans, wants to balance the budget, but in "the right way," alluding to a kinder, gentler, less racist capitalism.

But Clinton and the entire bourgeoisie are quite afraid of the potential Black struggle. The last rebellion, Los Angeles under Bush, was too easily calmed down by Clinton's promises of change. But any Black explosion now, with Clinton in office, could expose him decisively.

Both Black workers and the bulk of white workers can be won to a program that offers them a decent life and hope for the future. But this is not what either capitalist party has to offer. Half of white union members have swung away from the Democrats in the past twenty years in response to the loss of good industrial jobs and decent living standards. Always mixed in consciousness, when the economic situation worsened they were won over by Republicans who were faster to stir up existing racist and other reactionary notions.

Nixon and Reagan had more moderately labeled themselves conservatives, just speaking for "middle America." This language was tailored to the bulk of white workers, who could not yet be won over to an openly anti-union, anti-



Queens, New York City. Clinton and Dole pair up to oppose gay marriage. Former Clinton aide David Mixner said "They made a correct calculation that they could do this to us and get away with it."

minimum wage, racist agenda of a Buchanan. This is also how Clinton and Dole shape their language today.

BUREAUCRATS' LAST HURRAH?

The white workers' anger stoked by Buchanan has been a wake-up call to at least some of the labor bureaucracy as well as the bourgeoisie. Clinton's re-election may be the union honchos last hurrah, their last chance to win their base back to the fold. Their members' dissatisfaction with the Democrats and with the unions goes hand-in-hand.

That is why Sweeney is going all-out to get Clinton re-elected. He hopes to increase the unions' clout by showing the Democrats how badly they need the unions to win the swing voters they lost in '94, as well as layers of Black and Latino workers, back into the voting fold. This requires that Sweeney, like Clinton, talk out of both sides of his mouth, given the chauvinist protectionist line pushed by industrial unions for so long. Sweeney's problem is that he needs Clinton and the Democrats worse than they need him right now. The tail hardly wags the dog.

Clinton knows that for a labor bureaucrat today to reject the Democratic Party strategy is to open a door they have purposely sealed shut for decades. Every single struggle of workers for decades has been betrayed because of the treacherous line that the critical thing to do is vote for Democrats. If the bourgeoisie craves stability, all the more so do their loyal lieutenants in the bureaucracy — and that leads to the Democratic strategy.

However, as the Detroit strike shows, defending even the immediate needs of workers means a clash with the Democratic strategy. You can't have masses of striking workers confronting a Democratic mayor and his cops if your main goal is to get the mayor re-elected. You can't fight the cops on the picket lines and in Black and Latino communities — and then say go and vote for "100,000-more-cops" Clinton.

So when big actions occur, it will be up to the advanced workers to lead the fight against the bosses' cutbacks, racism and chauvinism simultaneously — the bureaucrats will never do it. Revolutionaries will have opportunities to demonstrate

in practice that this is the road to victory. In mass struggles, workers who are now quite mixed in consciousness — holding reactionary and anti-capitalist views simultaneously — have shown willingness to follow politically advanced workers who can show the way forward. A particularly encouraging fact is that in the past that Black militants in the factories who developed a reputation for knowing how to fight the bosses could win a following among workers of all colors.

COMMUNIST ROLE IN THE ELECTION

There are a few left groups running in the elections, and they have good things in their paper programs. Such measures as jobs for all at a living wage and universal free health care are in fact part of the socialist program we support. But these groups don't say in their election programs that socialist revolution, not elections, is needed to fully implement these measures.

Centrists normally speak of revolution, at least in selected venues. But they don't fight for it in practice, especially in front of

the masses. Thus in their election campaigns, where they have the opportunity for wider circulation, they refuse to say what is to the working class. Rather they try to make their programs seem more realistic, i.e., winnable under capitalism. This reflects the fear by the middle-class left of actual socialist revolution; it foreshadows their capitulation to the system in the future when a revolutionary situation breaks out.

Authentic communists state always and openly that there is no solution to poverty, joblessness, homelessness, racism, sexism and all the other ills of this society — short of smashing the capitalist state and replacing it with a workers' state on the road to socialism. The workers' state will expropriate the capitalist banks and corporations and cancel the debts owed by governments and individuals to these parasitical institutions, enabling the workers' economy to run in a planned centralized fashion; it would fund a massive program of public works and services, making the needed qualitative level of investment in modernizing industrial production. It would provide meaningful work for all, based on a sliding scale of hours, whereby the amount of work available is divided among the available workers at a living wage.

The workers' state would also outlaw all forms of discrimination immediately; its armed forces would be made up of and led by Blacks, Latinos, workers and youth, and would protect the oppressed instead of attacking them for a change. While racist, sexist and other discriminatory ideas can not be wiped out overnight, by providing full employment as well as good housing, health care, and education for all, the new society would undermine the material basis for racism and sexism within the working class.

In all our work revolutionaries also have to counter illusions in any national solution. Revolution in the U.S. will inevitably unleash international workers' revolution in short order. The policy of the North American workers' state will be to defend the liberation of all neo-colonial peoples — because the material interest of the working class and all humanity lies in overthrowing capitalism everywhere. Only by establishing a cooperative international economy can a new world of peace and abundance — socialism — be achieved.

There will simply be no need for the workers of one nation to compete with the workers of another. The future world will be genuinely internationalist as well as interracialist.

In the higher stage of communism, when society has developed to the point of abundance and all human beings can work according to their abilities and obtain resources according to their needs, then society will finally be able to root out the last vestiges of racism, sexism and chauvinism. The material basis for such reactionary ideology will have been ended, and a truly human culture can come into existence.

GENERAL STRIKE AGAINST CAPITALIST ATTACKS!

The most noticeable item absent from the programs of the supposedly revolutionary groups running in the elections is a call for the revolutionary party and socialist revolution. However, it is no coincidence that something else is missing. Leftists correctly acknowledge the all-sided nature of the capitalist attacks; they link the struggles of Blacks, Latinos, gays, women and unionists to working-class struggle. But exactly what they think is the best course of action is not indicated: just vague talk of "struggle" and "unity." This is because calling for anything specific would mean counterposing themselves to the labor bureaucrats, the misleaders of Blacks and Latinos as well as other pro-capitalist forces.

The LRP openly states our concrete battle plan. We raise the general strike against the capitalist attacks in our propaganda for the advanced layers, which is also geared toward training cadre how to agitate among the whole working class for the general strike. We use the public discussion over the election to publicize our strategy for the socialist revolution.

As the working-class is forced into struggle, it will recognize the need for a united fightback — especially if revolutionaries have prepared the way in advance. At this point, the *General Strike to Stop the Capitalist Attacks* slogan will convey the power of the working class when united in action against the capitalists. It is a call for conscious self-activity of the working class on a unified and centralized basis. It is intended to counter the amorphous populist calls for protest that don't draw the class line and are therefore open to takeover by Democratic politicians.

The general strike slogan will normally be cast defensively at first, as a means of halting the bourgeois assault, to reflect the immediate situation of the class. However, we stress during action as well as in our propaganda that a general strike is necessarily political, because it poses the question of which class should wield state power.

Even though the initial actions may be strikes by trade unions, the general strike can not be allowed to be confined by a narrow trade unionist understanding. Through the intervention of the revolutionary nucleus, its significance for the

jobless, the oppressed and the entire working class must be emphasized and accomplished. As the struggle proceeds, demands like *Jobs for All* and *Expropriation of the Banks and Corporations* will become popular and can be linked to the critical demands for class unity, such as *Smash All Racist and National Chauvinist Attacks* and *Mass Armed Self-Defense!*

The fight for the general strike is a necessary part of the fight for revolutionary party leadership. The union bureaucrats and allegedly "progressive" Democrats, Black and white, who hold sway over critical sections of the working class today, must be exposed for their role in preventing the only real unity, unity in action.

It is no accident that the middle-class left groups have no such strategy. When the heat is on, they will be ready to capitulate to whatever plan of action the current reformist leadership puts forward in order to restrain the struggle. For a telling case in point, see our article "ISO's Right Turn to Labor" in *PR 51*, which demonstrates how this centrist group tailed the union leadership in the Staley struggle.

BUILD THE REVOLUTIONARY PARTY!

For us, the most desirable feature of a successful general strike is that it allows the working class to take a leap in the building of a mass revolutionary party. If such a party is not built, the working class here and everywhere will face not only a full-scale depression but inevitably the growth of fascism and a devastating third world war. This barbaric scenario can be prevented. The working class must regain a sense of its power before it can build a mass party that is truly a revolutionary party of our class.

There is a huge gap today between the objective needs of the working class, especially its most oppressed sections, and its subjective consciousness of its own capacity for launching the fight against capitalism. In South Africa, France, Canada and Germany, mass struggles have already begun that demonstrate working class-power. Such struggles will occur here as well. The *key* problem has not been the lack of struggle but the lack of revolutionary leadership and revolutionary consciousness.

Mass action has been hampered by reformist pro-capitalist leaderships of various stripes for far too long. What revolutionary minded workers and youth must do as their top priority is re-create the Fourth International and its national sections in every country, including the United States.

**A Vote for Democrats or Republicans Is a Vote for
Racism, Austerity, War and Imperialism!
General Strike Against the Capitalist Attacks!
Workers' Socialist Revolution Is the Only Solution!
Build the Revolutionary Party of the Working Class!
Re-create the Fourth International!**

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German Workers March against Austerity

This report comes from a friend of the LRP/COFI living in Bonn, Germany.

by A. Holberg

On Saturday June 15th, at least 350,000 people, mostly workers from all regions of Germany, marched through Bonn to protest against a governmental plan that would destroy large parts of the working class's social gains of past decades.

Originally the demonstration had been proposed by a broad coalition of left-wing reformists, from student bodies to parties like the Greens and the Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS), the Eastern-based remnant of the former Stalinist SED. Had it been left to them alone, there would never have been a massive turnout; that happened because the German Trade Union Council (DGB) chose to take part.

By organizing the largest union demonstration since the Second World War, the DGB clearly proved it is still a force to be reckoned with. More important, the march showed that the working class still is the major social force in society. Unfortunately it also showed that the power of the class is only potential, as long as it does not free itself from the grip of its misleaders, the trade union bureaucracy.

KEEPING POLITICS DOWN

A few days before the demonstration, the DGB had revoked its cooperation with the above-mentioned coalition because they would not promise not to criticize the open collaborationist policy that the DGB has carried out in the last few months, the "Alliance for Work." This was meant to be the alliance of the DGB with the bourgeois CDU/CSU-FDP government and the capitalists themselves.

But this alliance has broken down, because the capitalists were not willing to give anything at all to the DGB leaders in return for their help in deregulating working conditions and lowering real wages. But the bureaucrats stuck with their collaborationist line. This was shown by the efforts the DGB leadership took to keep the demonstration as unpolitical as possible. And while the demagogues of the Social Democratic Party (SPD) and the Greens were present, none were allowed to speak, even though everyone knows the DGB is intimately linked to the SPD.

Instead they had a Protestant bishop on the speakers' list, who, like DGB boss Schulte, called for social peace and reactivating the Alliance for Work. This met with some protest from the audience, which in turn greeted with applause the speech of a student who said, "First the government's austerity program must fall, then the Chancellor".

However, these feelings didn't find clear expression in any organized way. Some local trade union chapters and even some smaller trade unions (and of course all the self-proclaimed revolutionary organizations) had spoken out against this one-sided form of class collaboration. They also distributed leaflets during the demonstration criticizing — sometimes in strong language — the "Alliance for Work." But this stance was not militantly taken up by the masses.

The banners carried at the march were far from revolutionary. In fact, many showed lingering illusions in the "social market economy," and hardly any expressed opposition to the workers' misleaders. Even the demagogic threats of union leaders and some leftists to "talk French" with the government [that is, to echo the massive strikes in France of last fall] would not help; it was obvious that the misleaders could

not yet be forced by their base to do so. And, by the way, because of the help of its union leadership, the French government is still in power and is carrying out its original plans — even if not all at once.

So when the DGB tops announced that this demonstration was the start of something bigger, this obviously meant they were masking the fact that they regarded it as a good opportunity to let off steam shortly before the government decided on its draft program.

This is what the government has in fact done, making only some trivial changes. And since summer holidays have begun, no counterattack by a working class enchained by the union leadership can be expected in the immediate future. True, there were some strikes before and after the package was adopted in parliament by the governmental majority. But they were all controlled by the bureaucracy and organized so as not to spill over to other domains and cause real harm.

That harming the class enemy was not what the DGB was after had been made clear even before the unions decided to organize the Bonn demonstration. Then DGB tops, including the presidents of the powerful metal and chemical workers' unions, had said that anything like a general strike would be impossible — because the DGB could not wage a political strike against an elected parliament and government!

LEFTIST SLOGANS

So it was up to the "revolutionary" groups to propose what should now be done by the working class.

There were two main camps of leftists present. One was the "autonomist" and anarchist camp, which had called for a "revolutionary bloc," but it attracted only about 1000 people. Among them, the so-called "Black Bloc" of street fighters tried to play "Cowboys and Indians" with the police, but the cops did not even bother noticing them. So a group at the edge of the rally broke through a police chain, allegedly to march to the federal buildings about a mile away. But then they decided to smash some windows and quickly dive into the rally again. This was their contribution to the problem of the crisis of the leadership of the proletariat! Unfortunately, although they have been much weakened in recent years, their ability to mobilize is still much greater than that of all the worker-oriented centrist groups together.

The second camp was the self-proclaimed Marxists, mainly the Stalinist German Communist Party (DKP), the Maoist MLPD and a variety of organizations claiming to have links to Trotskyism. There were also two or three Turkish groups present, including the former Maoist DİDF, and the Workers' Communist Party of Iran. The nationalist Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) had taken the opportunity to lead its large following to Hamburg that day, in order to demonstrate there for peace in Kurdistan. The majority of the Turkish "Marxist-Leninist" organizations, who used to be present always and everywhere, did not show up. Other foreign workers came as individuals but were not prominent.

While an open attack by the Stalinists against the trade union misleaders could not be expected, most of the Trotskyist groups did propose one form or another of generalized and radical action. But they too buried their criticisms of the union bureaucracy deep inside their papers.

In this respect, the show was undoubtedly stolen by the International Socialists (IS), one of the three fractions of the

now-defunct Socialist Workers Group (SAG), the German Cliffite outfit. This IS regards itself as the true Cliffites and calls the larger SAG and the Internationalist Socialist Organization (ISO), of which they had been founders and members for a year or so, right opportunists. They seized the rare opportunity of meeting more than a dozen workers at the same time to carry placards saying nothing but "Maggie Kohl — Hands Off the DGB!". They claimed that the DGB was under attack from the government and could therefore not be openly criticized now.

Their former comrades in the ISO at least called for more generalized strikes. Mass strikes were also proposed by the Linksruck group, a faction of the SPD's Young Socialists which shelters a part of the now dissolved SAG. The Socialist Alternative Vanguard (SAV), affiliated to the Militant Tendency, which had left the SPD shortly before the SAG entered it, collected signatures for a one-day general strike.

The "Union for Socialist Politics (VSP, formerly the Unified Socialist Party), a joint organization of left-wing Maoists and Mandelites, tried to take DGB leader Schulte at his word and called on him to organize simultaneous multi-branch strikes. This they did in a joint leaflet with the French Revolutionary Communist League (LCR), issued under the sponsorship of Winfried Wolf, a member of the PDS fraction in the Bundestag. The Revolutionary Socialist League (RSB), which had left the VSP in order to remain in the United

Secretariat (USFI), called for a general strike. The Workers Power Group, sister organization of British Workers Power, called not for a one-day general strike like the SAV but for an "unlimited general strike".

The Spartacists (SpAD) urged a "full strike" and the building of a revolutionary party fighting for a workers' government. This was exactly what the Socialist Workers League (BSA, affiliated to the ICFI) called for, while they also criticized all other groups for tailing after the DGB, which they said cannot be reformed in the interest of the working class. The Workers' Communist Party of Iran distributed a leaflet saying that all illusions about democracy and market economy had to be discarded, and that preparing for defensive struggles alone would lead to defeat, since the Social State was a thing of the past.

Whatever their positions, none of these groups could organize a big contingent to influence the demonstration in any meaningful way; they could only do propaganda work. This said, there were mainly two deviations: one, agitation for merely syndicalist goals; the other, ultimatist propaganda like that of the BSA.

Although it was undoubtedly a moving experience to see so many workers from all parts of the country, many of whom had probably never before taken part in any workers' demonstration, politically speaking this event did not at all show workers the light at the end of the tunnel. ●

COFI and LRP

continued from page 2

We had also gone to a Chicago War Zone conference on May 18 featuring former Staley local president Dave Watts, now also an LPA organizer. He repeated the self-serving line blaming the UPIU (United Paper Workers International) and AFL-CIO head John Sweeney alone for the Staley defeat.

In neither meeting did Griffin, Watts or other unionists or leftists present (including Labor Militant and the ISO) offer real insight into the War Zone defeats. The LRP argued that the pro-capitalist labor bureaucracy's fear of working-class mobilization had led them to restrain attempts at even a plant shutdown during the struggle — much less the wider general strike really needed.

In June we also attended the ISO Socialist Summer School as political opponents. As usual, the insecure ISO hacks policed the meetings and did everything possible to stifle discussion. After a discussion on the Chicano movement and Latino politics today, an LRPer challenged the ISO on their refusal to fight NAFTA, given its particularly oppressive effects on Mexican workers. Fortunately, the ISO's attempt to cut off our speaker was defeated by audience protest.

The big debate of the day was between Ray Rogers of corporate campaign fame and ISO hack Lance Selfa. The LRP not only nailed Rogers' treacherous advocacy of boycotts and passive civil disobedience as the only possible actions; we also proved that the ISO had tailed this defeatist strategy during the Staley struggle itself. (See "ISO's Right Turn to Labor, PR 51.) While our charge was backed up with evidence from our own work in Decatur as well as the ISO press, their response as usual was a litany of insults and political slander as a substitute for meaningful debate.

There were two "Jobs with A Living Wage" rallies in

Chicago. The first, in February, was built chiefly by SEIU, Acorn and the New Party. Originally claiming to actually call for jobs for all at a living wage, by the time the rally occurred it had shriveled to a demand for local Democrats to adopt a toothless resolution for some jobs at low wages. The second, in April, was a smaller, staler event, a showpiece for the SEIU hacks, coinciding with their Clinton-by-satellite convention. This time the bureaucrats triumphantly praised a City Council ordinance requiring companies with city contracts to pay their employees a minimum of \$7.57 per hour, a wage just above the poverty line for a family of four. And all signs point to this measure being even further diluted if it is to be passed at all.

The LRP is eager to protest against the Democrats at their convention in Chicago in late August. We will be attending planning meetings, now getting off the ground, toward building such actions, and we will work to make them genuine united fronts. It is no surprise that no labor unions are mobilizing workers to present their demands at the convention; it shows how every element tied to the labor bureaucracy is actively or passively capitulating to the Clinton attacks right in their own backyard.

ANTI-KLAN RALLY

On June 29 we joined in a united front demonstration, spearheaded by the Spartacist League, against a planned Ku Klux Klan rally in downtown Chicago. Surprisingly, the dozen or so KKKers showed up without police escort. Protesters seized the opportunity to charge them, and a brawl ensued for a minute. A few on our side were bleeding mildly, but the Klan seemed to get much the worse of it. Then the cops moved in to break it up and give the Klan their sticks and shields back. They arrested nine protesters.

Defense of the arrested activists is critical. There will be several rallies and court house pickets this summer. Call the Chicago LRP for info and to get involved. **Drop the Charges!**

NEW YORK LRP

During the spring semester at City College in Harlem, the LRP gave a successful forum on "Why the Working Class Needs Marxism." There is notable interest in Marxism on this working-class campus. But because of the defeat of the movement against the budget cuts last year and the escalation of electoralist agitation by student activists, opportunities for successful mass action this semester were dissipated. In addition to joining in those rallies that did occur, we continued our sales of *PR* at City College and expanded to other campuses of the City University system.

Right after the Labor Party conference in Cleveland, we presented an eyewitness report by an LRP observer (see p. 21). The New York LRP also offered a day-long educational conference in May, presenting talks on the labor party question and the labor aristocracy in relation to U.S. Blacks.

We participated in a number of rallies against police brutality. One on March 23 protested the murder of Leonard Lawton near his home in Harlem. Another on June 30 in Brooklyn denounced the brutal shooting of Aswon "Keshawn" Watson, who was unarmed when cops pumped 24 bullets into his body while his hands were raised in the air.

At both of these rallies the organizers convinced the protesters to enter "pig pens" set up by the police to control the crowd. Since trusting cops is unwarranted and gives out a completely wrong message, we opposed this policy and did not enter, instead joining a groups of participants across the street. At various demos the LRP has distributed our leaflet, "Police Attacks on the Rise: Workers' Revolution The Only Solution," which is available on request.

LRPers attended the ISO East Coast Conference on March 1, which covered up the ISO's labor record. Lee Sustar criticized the corporate campaign and civil disobedience strategies as responsible for the Decatur War Zone defeats — counter to the ISO line at the time. Sustar also called the treacherously led SEIU Local 32B-32J strike of New York City building maintenance workers this winter a "partial victory." This unwarranted conclusion doesn't even fit the ISO's usual opportunism, since it credits the corrupt

ISO's Principled Plagiarism

The ISO's March 1 *Socialist Worker* ran a couple of biting anti-Clinton quotes in its front-page article: Kevin Phillips calling him "the 20th century's most actively anti-union president," and Arkansas AFL-CIO President Bill Becker saying he'll "pat you on the back and piss down your leg." Anybody feeling a strange sense of déjà vu here was right: both quotes had already appeared in a paragraph in Alexander Cockburn's column in *The Nation* (February 26.)

More revealing than what the ISO lifted from that paragraph, however, is what they didn't. The quotes were aimed at exposing the bankrupt politics of a certain union official whom Cockburn had quoted as saying that "the most important labor project of the past half-century would be the re-election of Bill Clinton in November."

That official was none other than Dennis Rivera of the New York hospital workers' 1199. But Rivera's revealing statement is not to be found in *Socialist Worker* — he, after all, is one of the bureaucrats the ISO habitually promotes. Even plagiarists have principles: don't step on the toes of bureaucrats you're tailing.

right-wing hack Gus Bevona rather than the "progressive" bureaucrats the ISO favors. The claim is belied not only by the two-tier system that the workers were handed but by the subsequent forced strike of 300 32B-32J cleaners at the Port Authority Bus Terminal and the ongoing lockout of 400 32B-32J security guards at the World Trade Center, a center of strike activity — right after the signing of this contract.

YALE STRIKE SUPPORT

LRPers joined the rally in support of striking SEIU workers at Yale University in New Haven on Memorial Day. Over 1200 workers were present, and an open attitude toward socialist literature prevailed. As on other occasions, we also noted that many workers are still accepting the pro-Democratic line foisted on this occasion by AFL-CIO Vice President Richard Trumka and, at far greater length, by the old friend of bureaucrats and Democrats, Jesse Jackson Sr.

The LRP participants energetically countered the pro-bourgeois line, stressing our magazine's exposes on the Democratic Party and on the sellout of the Local 32B-32J strike in January by the SEIU. We advocated an all-out strike at Yale, as opposed to on-again-off-again selective strikes.

Now consider the ISO. With a contingent of over 100 supporters, they offered nothing except populist slogans (like "Stop Yale's corporate greed," "Stop the war on the poor," "An injury to one is an injury to all") which let the bureaucrats and Jackson off the hook. In this demonstration and in many others it is already becoming apparent what a large contingent of authentic revolutionaries, as opposed to the tailist ISO, could accomplish. These experiences make our resolve to build such a party even firmer. The openness of growing numbers of our fellow workers to revolutionary politics even at this point is encouraging.

LABOR FIDDLES WHILE NEW YORK BURNS

Organized labor's big activity in New York this spring was a series of "America Needs a Raise" town meetings in all five boroughs, capped by a pathetic 45-minute showcase rally at Wall Street on June 6. The entire production confirmed our view of the Sweeney "New Voice" leadership as the same old Democratic Party crap which, if it talks about workers at all, paints them as only needy victims.

In this light the Manhattan meeting on May 30 was notably hypocritical. A worker presented a horrific story about a failed union organizing effort of Dominican workers who get paid the minimum wage by the Xtra Super Jumbo supermarkets, which service Harlem, Washington Heights and the South Bronx. Their 1994 strike lasted two days; it was quickly smashed by cops and scabs, and all who went out were fired. As if to insult these workers, the AFL-CIO put them on the platform with Manhattan Borough President Messinger, soon to be running for mayor. She neither supported the strike at the time nor protested the use of union-busting cops!

Unlike the sterile Manhattan town meeting, the one at Hostos Community College in the Bronx was livelier, with over 500 attendees, including many 1199 hospital workers. However, when an LRP supporter, a long-time 1199 worker and union delegate, tried to speak out on why the union leaders present would not take the necessary actions to fight the attacks on the working class, she was immediately cut off.

As soon as the Sweeney do-nothing show left town, the attacks went into high gear. It focused on shutting down and privatizing hospitals in Black and Latino communities and laying off vast numbers of hospital workers, also mainly Black

and Latino. The LRP has been going to a full range of hospital rallies called in response, from informational picket lines at North General in the Bronx to marches from Roosevelt Hospital to St. Luke's in Harlem and protests at Coney Island in Brooklyn. A large rally from Bellevue to Governor Pataki's midtown office on June 12 was remarkable for the participation of the various hospital unions (1199, Local 420 of DC 37 and Local 144 of SEIU), whose leaders historically have refused to unite against hospital cuts. A Local 144 nurs-

ing home strike centered in Queens also began in June; plans for this struggle were a well kept secret while Sweeney & Co. were parading around town.

As we go to press, 1199 is proposing a sympathy strike for the nursing home workers, an unprecedented action if it occurs! The LRP is gearing for possible strike support activities among nurses and 1199 members as well as Local 144. Our leaflet is available on request; readers interested in joining us in this important work should contact us directly.●

Local 100 Hacks, Old and 'New,' Play Bosses' Game

Since February, the top leadership of Transport Workers Union Local 100 in New York has been forced to reshuffle itself. Local president Damaso Seda was kicked upstairs into a made-up position in the International. Sonny Hall, former local head and current International president, organized the sacrifice of his protege Seda in order to save the rest of his team — equally responsible for the 1994 contract sellout.

As a result of the bureaucratic shuffle, Secretary-Treasurer Willie James became the first Local 100 Black president — a reward not for the Black majority membership but for James' over 20 years of loyal hack service. Similar undemocratic reshuffling followed in several divisions, with promotions going to some hated and discredited officials.

Management, as we have reported, is starting to impose unprecedented takebacks, including mass contracting-out of work, layoffs and One-Person Train Operation (OPTO) — eliminating train conductors, a very dangerous and unpopular change. The old-line leadership's hopes that cosmetic changes will enable them to continue to give up past gains to the growing management offensive and keep their posts.

The Hall/James bureaucracy is devoted to the electoral charade. They spend much of their time and the members' money lobbying capitalist politicians and getting out the vote for Democrats (and some Republicans), but in the past they hardly informed the membership about it. This year they have festooned the union hall with posters of Clinton and Gore and flooded the members with leaflets about all their lobbying before the legislature. This effort is in line with the new leadership of the AFL-CIO, desperate to detour growing working-class anger into capitalist electoralism.

Though the James Gang intends to hang on to every post they can, they have almost openly admitted that they expect a sweep in next year's local elections by the reform-bureaucratic opposition, New Directions. ND, despite its claims to represent the rank and file, has functioned as a wing of the bureaucracy. They and their allies have held the

leadership of several divisions, including the all-important train operators, for almost five years in some cases.

New Directions recently went further to prove their bureaucratic trustworthiness to the old-liners: although they nominally oppose OPTO, they uncomplainingly helped organize testimony for a blue-ribbon panel to "consider" (i.e., rubber-stamp) it — as if the panel was not an obvious charade. As we predicted (see PR 50), the panel has decided in favor of OPTO on some lines. So ND came up with the bright idea of sending a busload of members of the divisions they lead to Albany to lobby the legislature to reconsider OPTO — the same bankrupt approach as the old-liners.

The various misleaderships have managed to convince many transit workers that they are weak, but workers have actually shown potential strength in the past year. It was their discontent that forced Seda out. In fact, transit workers have the power to start a fight-back against concessions and clean out the entire leadership.

The LRP is always seeking ways to unite the greatest number in struggle where revolutionaries can show the way forward to our fellow workers. In this regard Track Division shop steward Eric Josephson moved for a Local 100 demonstration against management attacks on jobs and on leading union oppositionists. James & Co. felt forced to call a demonstration on March 20, attended by approximately 4000 local members. As the LRP warned in our leaflet (available to readers on request), James stage-managed the rally into a non-fighting, pro-Democratic event.

The response to our leaflet and militant spirit of many attendees shows the potential for action that exists. As the LRP leaflet pointed out, a Local 100 strike against takebacks and anti-strike legislation could start the fight of all workers and show the way to a general strike. This would open the way for many workers to see the need to help build the revolutionary party, ousting and replacing all pro-capitalist leaderships, reformist or otherwise.●

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Reply to the Namibian WRP:

The Struggle for Trotskyism in Southern Africa

We in the League for the Revolutionary Party believe that South Africa's working class will likely play the leading role in the coming world socialist revolution. The future generation of revolutionary workers will be educated by their example, so we devote many pages of *Proletarian Revolution* to coverage of the South African struggles. Our articles also aim to play an important role in helping to build the authentic revolutionary party of the working class in South Africa that is necessary for the victory of that revolution.

Our two-part article on South Africa in *PR* 49 and 50 advanced what we see as the key lessons of the struggle and a revolutionary program to take it forward, and compared these conclusions to the political record of the various left groups in South Africa. It noted that we have been singularly impressed by the Workers International (WI(SA)) group. If the WI's literature is an accurate guide, it has passed the key strategic tests of the struggle that all the other left groups have failed. It has campaigned consistently for the political and organizational independence of the working class from the bourgeois ANC; and it has *openly* fought for the socialist revolution and the building of the revolutionary party.

But we added that these achievements are contradicted by the WI(SA)'s ties to the international tendency built around Cliff Slaughter's Workers Revolutionary Party (WRP[GB]) in Britain, the Workers International to Rebuild the Fourth International (WIRFI). We have written extensively about this hopelessly centrist grouping's long record of opportunism and outright treachery. (See *PR* 27, 28 and 29.)

Our article in *PR* 50 continued:

The WIRFI made its political debut in Southern Africa when its Namibian group, the WRP(N) ran in the 1990 elections as part of a rotten popular frontist electoral bloc called the United Democratic Front (UDF). The UDF was dominated by bourgeois elements who even received funds from the South African government (see *PR* 36).

Moreover, the WIRFI is moving rapidly to the right: the WRP(GB) has recently raised a call for a "new socialist party" in Britain which is indistinguishable from the reformist Workers List Party in South Africa. This new party's socialism is to be vague and certainly not revolutionary. Its internationalism is not to be that of building the Fourth International to lead the world's workers in struggle, but the ultimately nationalist notion of international "solidarity." With this policy, the WRP is looking to join with the lefts of the Labour Party who are disgruntled by the party's dominant right wing and want a new reformist party without the bourgeois leaders.

More recently, the WRP has launched a campaign around the war in the former Yugoslavia which has crossed the line from solidarity with the Bosnian victims of imperialism to tacit support for imperialist intervention in the region. The WRP did not even call for an end to the bombings, much less defend the Serbian forces from NATO's bombing and call for military support to those fighting the imperialists.

No matter how close to a revolutionary policy the WI(SA) has been following to this point, they cannot be trusted. Supporting popular frontism in Namibia and a new reformist party in Britain, they cannot be relied on to

continue to oppose the ANC and WOSA-type centrism.

The WI(SA)'s development toward revolutionary politics cannot continue with its allegiance to the WIRFI: either they degenerate into the right-centrist swamp of the WIRFI, or they see through the WIRFI's opportunism and break from this international tendency. Only then will we be able to determine the real character of the WI(SA).

These comments received a furious response, not from the leadership of the WIRFI nor the WI(SA), but from its group in Namibia, the Workers Revolutionary Party (WRP(N)). Their journal, *The Worker* (February 1996), accused the LRP of "slander," saying that our article raised "disagreements conjured up on sectarian grounds and supported by a deliberate distortion of facts"; we "willfully ignore[d] the truth to prop up . . . [these] false accusations".

As readers familiar with the LRP's record of honesty will expect, disproving the accusations will prove a simple task. Our examination of the WRP(N)'s accusations will also provide insight into key questions of the class struggle, as well as a deeper understanding of the degenerate politics of the WIRFI. Interested readers are encouraged to write to us to receive a free copy of the WRP(N)'s article.

WRP(N) DEFENDS POPULAR FRONTISM

The WRP(N)'s charges of dishonesty and slander stem mostly from our criticism of their participation in the UDF in 1989. The WRP(N) writes:

we agree that the UDF is a rotten organization . . . [but the LRP is] aware that the WRP(N) went into an electoral pact with them with the aim of extending our struggle to expose imperialist designs for Namibia. In the process we conducted ourselves in a principled way using every platform to expose the bourgeois nationalists including the UDF leaders for lying and false promises to the masses. But, you [the LRP] also withhold the fact that an important factor in the eventual majority decision of the section to enter into an electoral pact was the fact that the SWAPO ex-detainees had entered the UDF. This factor made it impossible for our section to have registered for the elections apart from the fact that an independent alliance between them and ourselves was precluded.

First, the good intentions of the WRP(N) do not justify their entering the UDF electoral alliance. As the WRP(N)'s comments acknowledge, the UDF was dominated by bourgeois nationalists. In fact, it included particularly reactionary bourgeois nationalists: the Damara Council and other forces who participated in the old racist regime's two-tier parliament, some of whom were such trusted agents of imperialism that their participation in the UDF was funded by South Africa's apartheid government!

But it is the ABC of Trotskyism that such alliances are impermissible under any circumstances. Trotskyists know that in this imperialist epoch, the bourgeoisie in all countries is reactionary and incapable of completing the struggle for basic bourgeois democratic rights like national independence. The Trotskyist program of permanent revolution understands that because of this, there can be no separate bourgeois democratic stage of the revolution and that the proletariat must set as its immediate aim the socialist revolution.

Flowing from this perspective is the conclusion that it is impermissible for revolutionaries to give political support to any bourgeois forces under any conditions. Political support for a party means that you support its coming to power and are even prepared to rule together with it. Political support for bourgeois forces is known as *popular frontism* and is counterposed to the perspective of permanent revolution. Thus Trotsky insisted that no political support be given to even "the shadow of the bourgeoisie."

This iron insistence on the political and organizational independence of the working class from bourgeois forces does not mean that the working class and its revolutionary party should not enter into alliances with bourgeois forces in certain struggles. However such alliances can only be temporary and for common *action*, not political support. Trotsky outlined the standards for such alliances like this:

The sole "condition" for every agreement with the bourgeoisie, for each separate, practical and expedient agreement adapted to each given case, consists in not allowing either the organizations or the banners to become mixed either directly or indirectly for a single hour: it consists in distinguishing between the Red and the Blue, and in not believing for an instant in the capacity or readiness of the bourgeoisie either to lead a *genuine* struggle against imperialism or not to obstruct the workers and peasants. (*The Third International After Lenin*, pp. 168-9.)

The WRP(N) subordinated its banner to the bourgeois UDF not for an hour, but for an entire election campaign! The WRP(N) has elsewhere claimed that it ran on its own independent socialist program in the elections, and indeed it did present a socialist program in its press. But it concluded its programmatic statements with a call for supporting the UDF in the elections on the basis of a program limited to the democratic questions of exposing the crimes committed by the leaders of the South West African People's Organization (SWAPO), which went on to win the elections. This was a stagist perspective: first support the bourgeois UDF in its struggle for democracy, then later struggle for socialism.

Accordingly, the WRP(N)'s article "For Real National Liberation" concluded at the time:

The task is to unite in action all working people, in the countryside and in the towns, behind the working class, in the struggle for real democracy, real national independence, and a genuinely representative Constituent Assembly. This is why the WRP is part of the UDF.

With statements like this, the WRP(N)'s support for the UDF could only be interpreted as an expression of confidence in its alliance partners' genuine opposition to imperialism. There is no reason to believe the WRP(N)'s assertion that it conducted itself "in a principled way using every platform to expose the bourgeois nationalists including the UDF leaders." The only publications of the WRP(N) from the time that we have seen are articles reprinted in the WRP(GB)'s *Workers Press*. As we pointed out then, while these articles attacked SWAPO constantly, they never said a single critical word against any of the bourgeois forces in the UDF! The WRP(N) has had six years to show us just one such statement but has not done so. It is clear that if such criticisms were made, they never had the central place in the WRP(N)'s election campaign that they should have had.

The aim of the UDF in the elections was to deny SWAPO the two-thirds majority of votes necessary for it to single-handedly alter the constitution. The WRP(N) shared this aim. They said a one-party SWAPO government was the

imperialists' aim and the greatest threat to the working class (*Workers Press*, Oct. 28, 1989). But as we wrote at the time: It is absolutely true that a SWAPO-only regime would have been dangerously repressive. But a joint regime with the racists, more directly dominated by South Africa, is certainly no better. The WRP/N apparently failed to see that Nujoma's earlier hopes for a one-party state had ended long before the elections; he knew he would have to bow under imperialist pressure. . . . The imperialists don't trust SWAPO alone to handle the inevitable mass pressure for much greater changes. . . . it is clear . . . that the imperialists, as well as some Namibian right-wing elements, were working to prevent a two-thirds majority . . . (PR 36.)

The WRP(N)'s entire perspective has been disproved, and the LRP's confirmed. The imperialists opposed SWAPO ruling alone and made every effort to limit their electoral victory, including secretly funding elements in the UDF leadership. In turn, following the elections, the UDF betrayed the struggle for democracy by approving the undemocratic bourgeois constitution along with SWAPO. By not preparing the working class for this betrayal, the WRP(N)'s support for the UDF undermined the struggle against imperialism. Yet it still defends its support of the UDF!

The WRP(N) argues that they were bound to enter the UDF because the survivors of the SWAPO repressions, whom they presumably aimed to recruit, had entered it. Winning the ex-SWAPO detainees to Trotskyism was a noble aim, but supporting their mistaken politics by following them into the UDF was no way to win them to revolutionary politics. The WRP(N) could have joined with them in every progressive struggle for an inquiry into the SWAPO leadership's crimes while carrying out an independent electoral campaign and arguing against the ex-detainees' illusions in the UDF.

It could have been a major contribution to the struggle against imperialism and for the socialist revolution had the WRP(N) run an independent campaign in the elections. Such a campaign would have enabled the WRP(N) to expose the role of both SWAPO and the UDF in supporting imperialism and to counterpose the program of the socialist revolution.

THE REVOLUTIONARY METHOD

The WRP(N) continues in a seemingly honest spirit: . . . we blame no true revolutionary from questioning our electoral pact with the UDF. Indeed many of our own comrades did not feel happy about it. But for entirely different reasons than yours. They question it on the basis that it was a wrong tactic within the overall context of our principled struggle against the nationalists, the church and the imperialists.

This is a fundamentally wrong way of looking at the question. Communists must differentiate between principled strategic questions (which are fundamentally necessary in all countries at all times) and tactical questions (which depend on time and place). Without such an understanding, a revolutionary party is like a ship without a rudder that can be blown off-course by the slightest breeze — there is nothing to prevent its tactical maneuvers from becoming outright betrayals. Indeed, if revolutionaries permit political support to bourgeois forces like the UDF, exactly what *can't* they do? Trotsky made this point in discussing popular frontism:

The question of questions at present is the People's Front. The Left Centrists seek to present this question as a tactical or even as a technical maneuver, so as to be able to practice their little business in the shadow of the

People's Front. In reality, the People's Front is the *main question of proletarian class strategy* for this epoch. It also offers the best criterion for the difference between Bolshevism and Menshevism. (*Writings [1935-36]*, p. 43.)

Undaunted, the WRP(N) continued:

We, therefore, reject your attempt to criticize our tactic outside its overall context. . . . Because you do not explain how you view our campaign against Resolution 435, our initiation of the struggle for the SWAPO detainees, our opposition and exposure of the church, and our exposure of the connection between the imperialists, the churches and Stalinists. . . . We would like to know how you weigh up this struggle with your blanket accusation of populism.

The WRP(N) is aware that we devoted quite some time to the merits of their other work in our article "Revolutionary Strategy for Namibia" (PR 36). In particular, we supported the call for an inquiry into the persecution of the SWAPO ex-detainees, as the WRP(N) knows. The purpose of the article in PR 50 that so outraged them was not to discuss the WRP(N) but the WI(SA), so we analyzed the South African group's politics, not the WRP(N)'s.

In any case, the WRP(N) is wrong again. Revolutionaries must not only tell the difference between questions of principle and those of tactics, but also between big and small tests of the character of political groups. While mistakes can be made in any struggle, a group which cannot even approximate a correct position in the big events of the class struggle will prove worthless for revolution. In this spirit, we must point out that the 1989 elections were a decisive test of all political groupings in Namibia, probably the most decisive the WRP(N) ever faced. And it failed the test horribly.

As should be clear, the intentions or other work of the WRP(N) are not a factor in assessing whether the WRP(N)'s participation in the UDF was correct or not. However, these factors are important in assessing the nature of the WRP(N). The breach of principle in pursuit of revolutionary aims is called opportunism, and that's what the WRP(N) was guilty of. The WRP(N) is a centrist grouping, meaning that they vacillate between their revolutionary rhetoric and reformist practice. That is how we "weigh" the WRP(N)'s popular frontism with its various interventions in the class struggle.

While we believe that the WRP(N) made an impermissible breach of revolutionary principle in supporting the UDF, we do not believe that people who make such errors are therefore permanently condemned. What is important is that they learn from their mistakes and honestly correct them.

The leaders of the WRP(N) show no signs of learning. The WRP(N) ran an independent campaign in the 1995 elections in Namibia, and while its program for socialism seemed to lead through parliament and not revolution, this was comparatively better than in 1990. But its defense of joining the UDF in 1990 shows there is nothing preventing it from joining the next UDF-type popular front that comes along.

THE WIRFI'S OPPORTUNISM

The other source of the LRP's "slander" of the WIRFI, according to the WRP(N), comes from our pointing to the differences between the principled positions taken by the WI(SA) in the struggles in South Africa, and the record of unprincipled opportunism of the WIRFI internationally. But the WRP(N) chose not to politically address our charge that the WI(SA)'s insistence on the need for a revolutionary party, and its correct opposition to WOSA's attempts to form a mass but non-revolutionary socialist party, contradict the

WIRFI's pursuit of forming a new socialist party in Britain that is not revolutionary but rather formed on the same sort of 'broad' basis as WOSA's.

Instead, the WRP(N) simply assert that on the contrary, the WIRFI is not a "conglomeration of nationalist sections" but that "its sections form one organization with a centralized leadership. In fact, the South African section makes up part of the central leadership." They go on to hail the WIRFI leadership's call for a "new party" and praise

the essential intervention of the leadership first of the Preparatory Committee, and now the Workers International in every section, including ours . . . for a proper understanding of the party in relation to the class. . . . We appreciate this struggle as the only guarantee against the possibility of inexperienced sections sinking into reformism and opportunist theory and practice. . . . Our struggles inside our sections especially is to guard against petit bourgeois arrogance in the face of new knowledge and experience.

If the WI(SA) and/or other elements within WIRFI insist on the need for revolutionary party leadership of the class struggle, they will face such a struggle with the WIRFI leadership. If this does happen, we expect the WIRFI leaders will find willing lapdogs among the leaders of the WRP(N).

WRP(N): WHEN DESPERATE, LIE

The criticisms we have made of the WRP(N) obviously come from the left. Clearly the WRP(N) felt embarrassed by this and searched for some grounds on which to criticize us from the left. Unable to find any, they make them up. First, our article on Colin Powell in PR 50 is criticized for creating "the illusion that capitalism could find a 'man on the White Horse' in Powell to steer it into clearer waters." This, says the WRP(N), means that we "elevate capitalism's makeshift tactics to real solutions to its epochal crisis."

Had we ever suggested that capitalism has "real solutions to its epochal crisis," that would indeed be dangerously disorienting. But we did not. Capitalism can only gain temporary respite from its epochal crisis by dealing strategic defeats to the working class. We never wrote anything that would contradict this and we challenge the WRP(N) to prove otherwise. In the meantime, we continue to raise our main slogan: *The Workers' Socialist Revolution is the Only Solution!*

If this first charge could perhaps come from confusion, the WRP(N)'s second charge is an outright lie. They write:

It is also our firm belief that your inability to explain the collapse of Stalinism into fascist-like states in eastern Europe leads you into support for Serbian fascism and "ethnic cleansing" against the WI's support for Bosnian nationalism against the imperialist carve-up of Bosnia.

South Africa and Proletarian Revolution

The South African black working class is the leading mass force in the struggle to overthrow world imperialism and free the human race. This new pamphlet, a collection of recent articles by Matthew Richardson, details the revolutionary lessons of the rich experience of the South African proletariat.

A COFI Pamphlet

\$2.00

Socialist Voice, P.O. Box 3573, New York, NY 10008

One cannot imagine a more serious charge than support for fascism and genocide. Yet the scoundrel who authored this trash felt no obligation to supply even one piece of evidence for it! We demand an immediate retraction of this slander.

The LRP throughout the war in ex-Yugoslavia has called for the defense of the Bosnian masses from Serbian and Croatian attack. But unlike the WRP(GB), we did not support Bosnian nationalism or any other form of this bourgeois ideology. And unlike the WIRFI, we unconditionally opposed every imperialist intervention in the Balkans: not just the U.N. arms embargo against Bosnia but also the boycott of the Serbian economy and the NATO bombing of the Bosnian

Serbs. The WIRFI's selective opposition to imperialism's attacks identifies them in Lenin's terms as social-imperialist.

BREAK FROM THE WIRFI!

Having begun their article promising that they would prove the LRP to be slanderers and liars, the leaders of the WRP(N) have only proven this a worthy self-description. Thus has the WRP(N) added a perversely appropriate installment to an already lamentable political history. We can only hope that genuinely revolutionary workers attracted to the radical appearance of the WIRFI will see in this further convincing evidence for why they should break from the WIRFI and onto the road of genuine Trotskyism. ●

Immigrants

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regular cop forces; the former's responsibility is to terrorize immigrants, the latter's to harass and murder civilians for the crime of being dark-skinned. But the truth is the vast majority of illegal immigrants are white, while the masses of Mexicans who come to the U.S. fill the ranks of superexploited workers. The racism is blatant.

A supplementary line of attack is the campaign for "English Only" laws, which mandate that government documents be produced in the English language only and deny funding for bilingual instruction in the schools. The English Only drive has scored a number of victories, including California in 1986, Arizona and Florida in 1988 and Georgia in 1996. Federally, it appears to be stalled in the Senate.

Legal immigrants are also under attack in pending Congressional legislation. High income requirements set up barriers for family members of current residents; legal immigrants who use "excess" public services could be deported; and undocumented workers who stay in the U.S. for a year would be barred from entry for 10 years. Clinton specifically wants a 30 percent reduction in legal immigration.

SERVING CAPITALISM'S NEEDS

The imperialist bosses are divided over immigration. On the one hand, they know that many "third world" countries are ready to explode; they see migration as a safety valve to defuse mass discontent. And bosses in imperialist countries like the United States are happy to have a larger pool of workers available to exploit.

On the other hand, they campaign against immigrants, stirring up nationalist and racist fervor to divide workers so as to better exploit us. Scapegoating immigrants also promotes imperialism, justifying U.S. political and military intervention in other countries.

As well, immigrants who live in constant fear of arrest and deportation are less likely to challenge abusive working conditions. So the ruling class allows superexploitative bosses (like Kathie Lee Gifford's suppliers in New York's garment district) to get away with violations of labor laws that workers fought for decades to win.

Finally, anti-immigrant legislation, constitutional or not, endangers all working people who can be harassed and denounced as illegal: language, accent and skin color will be used as targets for discrimination in hiring and INS raids on workplaces, even more than they already are.

The workers most subject to replacement by new immigrants are the lowest-paid with the least job protection — in the U.S. today that means Blacks, Latinos and youth in general. Unfortunately, that reality led a large minority of Black, Latino and Asian voters to approve Proposition 187.

Some bosses say they prefer immigrant workers to U.S.-born Blacks, because of their perceived hard work and passivity to employer demands, and the long history of struggle on the part of Blacks. They are finding, however, that a new record of struggle is being written by immigrant workers, like the Latino janitors, drywallers and garment workers in Southern California. The multiracial Los Angeles class riot in 1992 also put the lie to the myth of Latino passivity.

Because the attack on immigrants is a leading edge of the capitalist onslaught against all workers, it is shameful that the AFL-CIO endorses much of the anti-immigrant legislation, like upgraded border enforcement and a federal I.D. system. This fits with the labor bureaucrats' enthusiasm for trade protectionism, a self-defeating way to protect U.S. jobs; in reality, it undermines class solidarity by caving in to racist and chauvinist sentiment and stirring up U.S. workers against their brothers and sisters abroad.

WHAT SOLUTION TO LABOR COMPETITION?

Bourgeois experts counter the racists' claim that immigrants are economically strangling the U.S. *Business Week* and *Forbes* have noted that immigrants pay far more in taxes than they get in services. But it's not just taxes that bosses squeeze from workers. Immigrants, like all workers, produce surplus value beyond their wages, which goes straight to capitalist pockets. That's why most anti-immigrant politicians call not for banning immigration, just for tougher restrictions to hamper immigrant workers' ability to fight the bosses.

Under capitalism, competition among workers is inevitable. Capitalism needs its "reserve army of labor", a pool of unemployed workers: both to supply masses of labor when the need arises without disrupting ongoing production, and as downward pressure on the wages and combativity of employed workers. Jobs for all at a living wage is incompatible with capitalist profit-making.

That is why all workers, and especially the most oppressed, need socialism in the imperialist and the oppressed countries for mass immiseration to be ended. A socialist society would decisively smash national and racial discrimination and would move to overcome divisive working-class competition. The labor needed for production and services would be divided among all: the more workers there were, the more society would gain and the less time we would each have to work. In contrast to rational planning by the working class,

the capitalist "free market" in labor is an outright obstacle to the egalitarian organization of work.

In the imperialist United States, communists stand for full rights for immigrants, jobs for all, and open borders to allow all economic and political refugees to enter the country and work. Only through such a program can the inequalities and divisions among workers be overcome. We fight for these demands under capitalism, but we say explicitly that only a socialist planned economy makes them possible.

An international campaign to fight for high wages and decent conditions everywhere should be the highest priority of workers', immigrants' and anti-racist organizations. Only a world party of socialist revolution would really fight for the common interests and unity of the international working class. Capitalism's inequities cannot be abolished while the system itself survives. But we must expose the chauvinism of U.S. unions and demand that they at least start a campaign on behalf of the international class struggle.

CHAUVINISM ON THE LEFT

Some leftists trying to defend immigrant workers end up apologizing for capitalism because they downplay the inequalities within the working class that decadent capitalism generates in its imperialist stage.

The left-posturing Spartacist League is plainly chauvinist. It opposes the "open borders" slogan for refugees fleeing political oppression or economic misery, advocating instead full citizenship rights for all immigrants, legal or not — only when they get here. It denounces "open borders" as liberal utopianism, unachievable under capitalism. But since the SL itself raises genuinely utopian slogans like "Abolish the CIA" and "Disarm the Cops" in the capitalist U.S., its real reason must be something else.

And it is. The Spartacists argue against ending immigration restrictions, as follows:

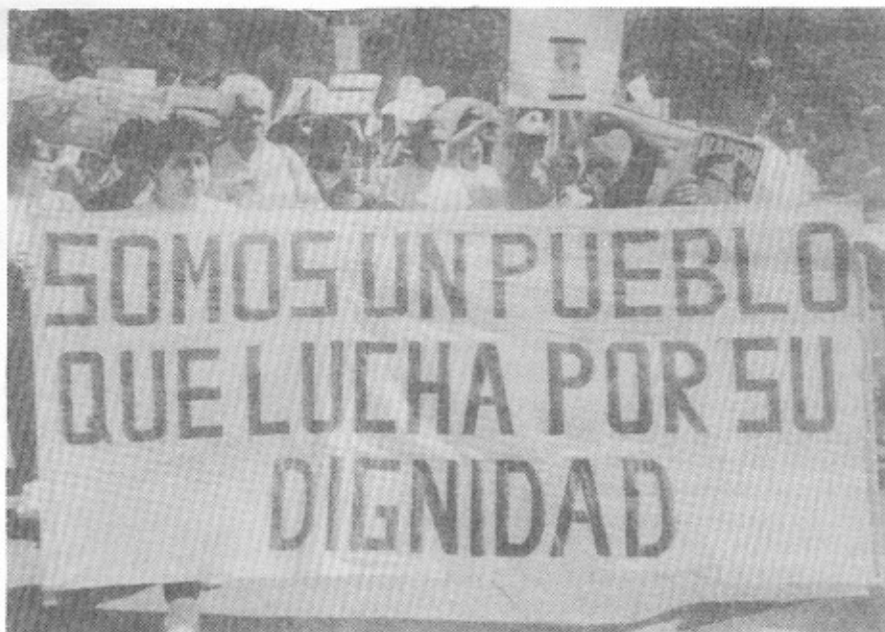
However, on a sufficiently large scale, immigration flows could wipe out the national identity of the recipient countries. . . . Unlimited immigration as a principle is incompatible with the right to national self-determination (*Workers Vanguard*, Jan. 18, 1974.)

The SL still maintains this position. Thus it defends the national identity and right to self-determination of the imperialist U.S. — which defends its interests all too well without the help of leftist supporters. Communists, in contrast, defend resisters and refugees against imperialism.

The International Socialist Organization's pamphlet, *Why Immigrants Are Not to Blame*, is less openly chauvinist, but instead relies on liberal moralist arguments. It too addresses itself to "U.S. citizens" — without even mentioning the unpleasant existence of imperialism and superexploitation! Under the heading "Immigrants don't steal jobs from U.S. citizens," the ISO argues that there is no basis for U.S. workers' fears of immigrants except bad ideas. This is nonsense, and no way to combat capitalist anti-immigrant campaigns. Immigrants are used by the bosses to compete for U.S. jobs because they are often ready to accept lower wages and poorer working conditions and are more readily victimized if they fight back. The solution is to fight for jobs for all rather than ignore the very real competition among workers.

The ISO goes on to argue that immigrants are not to blame because their labor benefits other workers: "Immigration increases the number of people of working age in the population and workforce. Active workers support the retired population drawing Social Security checks."

This, says the ISO, is "another rarely-discussed contribution of immigrants to the U.S." A contribution it is — to U.S.



Latinos march in defense of immigrants. Sign reads: "We are a people that fights for its dignity."

capitalism and its superexploitation! Again, does the ISO mean to approve a Social Security system in which "illegal" workers never get to see a penny of the taxes deducted? Or in which low-paid workers, including many immigrants, are taxed disproportionately to let upper-bracket taxpayers off the hook? The ISO's desire to sound practical leads them to find benefits in grossly unequal capitalist taxation.

The ISO nominally calls for unity of all working people and for a socialist society that provides for the needs of all rather than the profits of a few. But it does not admit — indeed, it covers up — the material roots of working-class division within a capitalist society in an imperialist world. Genuine communists do not deny the reality of competition for jobs under capitalism, nor its immiserating and divisive effects. Only by understanding the system that oppresses and exploits us can working people fight against it effectively and learn the necessity to overthrow it.

Communist policy is determined by needs of the proletariat as a whole. As Karl Marx explained, the capitalists form a veritable fraternity defending property and profits from the workers. The working class will emancipate itself only when it learns to overcome the racial and national antagonisms nourished by capitalism. That is why revolutionaries stand for an international proletarian party — the re-created Fourth International — and international revolution to put an end to imperialism.

Smash All Attacks on Immigrant Workers — Equal Rights for Immigrants!

**A Vote for Democrats or Republicans Is a Vote for Imperialism, War, Austerity and Racism!
Re-Crete the Fourth International! Workers' Socialist Revolution Is the Only Solution! Open the Borders!**

PROLETARIAN REVOLUTION

Summer 1996

Defeat Anti-Immigrant Attacks!

by Tony Goodes

As the election proceeds, the Democrats and Republicans are competing to see who can be toughest on immigrants. The two capitalist parties are clamoring for curbs to protect America from the "criminal conduct of illegal aliens" — in the words of California's trend-setting Proposition 187.

Against the national chauvinism of liberals and conservatives, the Marxist position on immigration is internationalist. We do not consider national boundaries sacrosanct: they are bourgeois institutions that defend capitalist rule by dividing the working class. Starvation wages and horrendous conditions inflicted by imperialism on the poorest countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America drive millions to leave their homelands and families. They have every right to seek refuge and jobs wherever they want, especially in imperialist countries like the United States.

Migration from South to North has grown rapidly in the past decade and a half. As the economic crisis of capitalism has intensified, the Stalinist and nationalist regimes of the East and South have collapsed one by one, leaving social devastation in their wake. The imperialists seek to bleed dry the so-called Third World with "free trade" policies like NAFTA and the "structural readjustment" policies of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund. They have demanded the privatization of nationalized industries, leaving millions unemployed, and wiped out millions of small-scale farmers, turning them into landless refugees.

For the capitalists to complain that immigrants are the source of economic hardship is the height of imperialist arrogance. But this is precisely what they do. Facing working-class struggle against their domestic policies of austerity and intensified exploitation, the imperialists seek the support of the most privileged workers by stoking the fires of racism and nationalism. The rulers of every imperialist country blame immigrants for unemployment and debt, and enact new laws against them. Germany has anti-Turk policies, France anti-Arab, Britain anti-Black and anti-Asian, even the Mandela government of South Africa is anti-African immigrant. These measures have helped produce a dramatic increase in violent, often murderous, racist attacks on immigrant communities.

U.S. LINES OF ATTACK

In the U.S., anti-immigrant attacks have focused most sharply against Mexicans in the Southwest. Proposition 187, making "illegal" aliens ineligible for public services, including health and education, was passed in 1994 and is now blocked in the courts. Still, it is the model for bills now in Congress, which would also increase federal funding for repression.

Even without additions, border agents arrested 1.3 million "illegals" in 1995 alone. As a consequence of the

militarization of the Mexican border, 300 immigrants died in 1995, mainly from drowning and heat exhaustion from wandering the desert in search of less guarded places to cross.



Rally at California hotel where union is organizing low-paid workers.

The recent videotaped cop beating of two Mexican workers, Leticia González and Flores Martínez, was only one visible example of official brutality.

President Clinton, complaining that U.S. borders are "leaking like sieves," has signed executive orders to beef up patrols. He also has increased funding for the repressive Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) by 25 percent. In this spirit, the Democratic Party produced a TV commercial which even the *New York Times* (June 27) called "inflammatory". According to the *Times*:

As the narrator declares that Mr. Clinton has increased the number of Border Patrol officers, the screen fills with a brown-skinned man, presumably an illegal alien, being handcuffed by someone who is apparently a Border Patrol officer. Later, another swarthy man is shown climbing down a wall with a rope, then leaping to the ground. As the narrator talks about the police, the commercial shows two gloved hands clutching a large chisel and trying to pry open a window.

Meanwhile, the narrator intones: "... President Clinton increased Border Patrols 40 percent to catch illegal immigrants. Record number of deportations. No welfare for illegal aliens. Republicans opposed protecting U.S. workers from replacement by foreign workers. The Dole/Gingrich budget tried to repeal 100,000 new police. ... Only President Clinton's plan protects our jobs, our values."

Clinton links increasing the Border Patrol and expanding

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