

France Four Years Later

The French general strike of May-June 1968 was the largest in history: ten million workers struck and paralyzed the entire country. Since then, DeGaulle has been ejected by the 1969 referendum which took place in the wake of the strike, but the bonapartist government which he left behind remains intact, although in an increasingly precarious position. The working class is increasingly restless, the French economy faces rising economic difficulties, and the government has been shaken by several financial scandals in the last year. In response the Communist Party and the Socialist Party have been obliged to conclude an electoral agreement which could lead to a repeat of the 1936 Popular Front government. The five-year term of the parliament elected in 1968 is almost over, and the forthcoming elections (which must take place sometime between now and March 1973) have been at the center of the tactical preoccupations of the French left. *Le Monde*, France's leading bourgeois paper, was no doubt correct when it termed the CP-SP agreement the most important event on the French parliamentary left since 1936.

These developments take place in the context of the class struggle in France and internationally and the evolution of inter-imperialist rivalries.

Militancy on the Rise

Since 1968, there has been an upsurge in the subjective militancy of the French working class, which has again begun to use tactics with a long history in the working-class movement and which were brought back to the fore by the 1968 events. Thus factory occupations, taking factory managers hostage, unlimited strikes (as opposed to 24-hour strikes or revolving work stoppages, "grèves tournantes," which had been the norm in France in the immediately preceding period) have increased in number and frequency. In addition, physical confrontation between strikers and the forces of the state has significantly escalated. In one case, strikers created an oil fire with flames fifty feet high to keep police and scabs out of the factory.

But the subjective heritage of 1968 is not un-mixed. The 1968 strike far surpassed the general strike of 1936 in size but the gains won in 1968, although real, were qualitatively less than those of 1936 and have been largely wiped out since then by inflation and the bourgeoisie's counter-offensive. The working class feels that it was cheated—and rightly, even if this sentiment has not focused clearly on its proper target, the French CP. Since 1968, working-class militancy has been strongest in marginal industries in which the union movement had been weak or, in some cases, non-existent. In that sense, organi-

Not a Lesser Evil, but a Workers Party!

Labor and the Elections

The process of the 1972 elections ties together all the strands of failure of the last seven years of American radical politics. Nixon's wage controls have essentially achieved their goal of taming the demands of the militant labor upsurge without a real fight having been mounted against them, and the imperialist ruling class has succeeded in controlling both the dangerous revolutionary offensive in Vietnam and the domestic anti-war movement. The American working class, despite massive discontent with the coalition politics of the two capitalist parties and immense militancy on economic questions over the past five years, is still lacking even the beginnings of an organized movement for its own class political party.

The Democrats have harvested the rotten remains of the previous wasted era of petty-bourgeois protest politics. The political heirs of those who "put their bodies on the line" against the war, together with the "heroes" of the Chicago conspiracy trial, have trooped back into the party of war they demonstrated against in 1968. The reformist nationalists of the black movement have reaped what the virulently independent "black power" radicalization sowed, and, with a few "separatist" provisos, are

leading their followers as well back into the Democratic "white power structure" in the finest tradition of M. L. King. Standing at the door to welcome the "radicals" back home is the newly-re-emergent and growing Communist Party, against whose "old left" politics so much "New Left" venom was directed.

The McGovern Illusion

Like the phony "peace candidates" who ran in Democratic primaries in the late sixties, "lesser evil" McGovern has rapidly vacated all his earlier so-called "radical" positions, "clarified" his pro-capitalist essence and generally accommodated to every section of the ruling class and bourgeois power structure including Wall Street, Wallace, the cops, Mayor Daley, New York's Wagner (resurrected for the occasion), and all the old Democratic Party machines. His direct subservience to the Democratic machine, and through it, to the ruling class, was demonstrated quite clearly by the hilarious "Eagleton affair," in which neither the will of the mass convention of the "reformed" Democratic Party, nor the "public opinion" expressed in the heavily pro-Eagleton mail flow during the "affair" counted one whit against the wishes of the big capitalist political mouthpieces as to who could or could not be on the ticket.

"Peace" candidate McGovern reveals his fundamentally pro-imperialist politics with his defense of the use of troops if necessary to defend Israel, i.e., U.S. interests in the Near East. The single-issue movement against the Vietnam War revealed the same fundamentally pro-imperialist politics at the time of the June 1967 Arab-Israeli War, when, in an orgy of Zionist and pro-Zionist chauvinism, Vietnam doves became shrieking hawks. The critical political difference between then and now, enabling this "antiwar movement" to move into a majority position in the Democratic National Convention is the rise in bourgeois defeatism--i.e., a tactical shift in ruling class strategy—over the seemingly endless quagmire in Vietnam.

Thus the 1972 election experience, incorporating such "miracles" as the ousting of the Daley machine from the Democratic convention (against the wishes of McGovern) while the representatives of the very same victims of Daley's cops comfortably take their seats, together with drastically increased youth, female, Black, etc., representation thoroughly demonstrates the futility of attempts to reform the Democratic Party or any capitalist party. Despite the change in personnel, the same capitalist machines and big

continued on next page



Rouge, 11 March 1972

200,000 workers and students protest the murder of Pierre Overney, at funeral march boycotted by the CP.

zation of the class has expanded. At the same time, the traditional strongholds of militancy have been somewhat reluctant to move toward large-scale action. Nevertheless, the upsurge of marginal sectors is indicative of the subjective readiness of the class.

French Economy Squeezed

In addition to the uneven working-class upsurge, and feeding decisively into working-class militancy, the economic situation in France has been applying substantial pressure on the bourgeoisie. The fall of DeGaulle also meant the attempt by the French bourgeoisie to renovate the particularly antiquated structure of French capital. However, it has been largely unable to accomplish this goal. The successive "crises" of

continued on page 11

■ SWP/WONAAC SINK IN BOURGEOIS SWAMP

■ TOWARD A COMMUNIST WOMEN'S MOVEMENT!
Lessons from the Bolshevik Struggle Against Women's Oppression

Pages
8-9

Comic Opera-tunists and the General Strike

—A NOTE FOR THE INTERNATIONAL SOCIALISTS—

In an attempt to cover up their gross opportunism, the IS is quick to denounce as "sectarian," by means of lies and slander, the principled actions of revolutionary Marxists. An article on the Labor for Peace Conference entitled "Comic Opera Sectarians Denounce Rank and File Caucus" in the August 1972 issue of *Workers' Power* states, "The 'Spartacist League,' along with the 'Vanguard Newsletter' group, denounced the one-day work stoppage proposal as reformist, and demanded instead a 'general strike until the war is over.' This demand has a militant sound, similar to a demand for the seizure of state power. Such a slogan, however, is simply revolutionary posturing..."

The answer to this charge is simple—it's a lie.

Not only does the IS completely ignore the clear distinction between the demands of the VNL and SL, but also, in order to cover up its own opportunism, it purposefully obscures the principled SL objection to the way in which the IS' work-stoppage proposal was raised. Such behavior is completely unacceptable for principled socialists, but it is not much of a surprise coming from the IS.

The *Vanguard Newsletter* proposal (or more correctly, the proposal of the "Committee for Rank and File Caucuses," an unprincipled amalgam of Harry Turner's VNL and the Socialist Forum group) does indeed call for building for a "general strike of labor by organizing strike committees in the shops to stop all production and services until the war against the Indo-chinese workers and peasants is ended..." (from "A Rank and File Program to End the War," emphasis ours). The Spartacist League demand for "Strikes Against the War and the Wage Freeze" is a proper transitional approach. As explained in the text of the *Workers Vanguard* supplement distributed at the conference, such strikes should be seen as "leading up to a nationwide general strike."

Trotsky on the General Strike

A polemic of Trotsky's—"The ILP and the Fourth International" (September 1935)—dealt with the question of the general strike. The centrist ILP (Independent Labor Party) of Great Britain, which broke from bourgeois pacifism only half way towards a proletarian program and affiliation with the Fourth International, was in many ways an ideological ancestor of the IS. Trotsky, basing himself on Engels, criticized the ILP's "radical phraseology" on the question of "the general strike to stop war":

"The general strike is not only separated here from the social revolution but also counterposed to it as a specific method to 'stop war.' This is an ancient conception of the anarchists which life itself smashed long ago. A general strike without a victorious insurrection cannot 'stop war.' If, under the conditions of mobilization, the insurrection is impossible, then so is a general strike impossible... the aim of revolutionary policy should not be an isolated general strike, as a special means to 'stop war,' but the proletarian revolution into which a general strike will enter as an inevitable or very probable integral part."

—Writings of Leon Trotsky, 1935-36

A general strike which is not immediately successful by the threat alone must either be a fiasco or lead directly to a revolutionary situation and the building of organs of dual power by the proletariat. Therefore to call for a general strike "until the war is over" is either meaningless utopian bombast or a willful attempt to deflect the revolutionary drive for power of the proletariat.

It is no accident that the proposal of the Vietnam Veterans Against the War, "Stop the War With a General Strike," had an impatient,

pacifist tone, since to view the general strike as a special means just to deal with war is closely akin to viewing war, not capitalism, as the central problem facing mankind. The radical phraseology of the VNL (CRFC) proposal is just one step away from the VVAW's pacifist-utopianism.

The Spartacist League has always proposed agitation for political strikes against the war and combatted all opportunist excuses based on assertions of the "premature" nature of this slogan or of the subjective unreadiness of the workers. During the heyday of petty-bourgeois radicalism in the late 60's, we raised the demand for "An Anti-war Friday" in order to split the class-collaborationist anti-war movement in a working-class political direction. Needless to say, this proposal was "sectarian" to the IS, which was just as opportunist then as it is now. In 1967, the IS (then Independent Socialist Clubs) supporters in the Bay Area chapter of Trade Union SANE supported the U Thant proposals for a general cease-fire and negotiations in Vietnam, in order to remain on favorable terms with the liberal bureaucrats in the leadership!

In order to clarify this matter more thoroughly, we have sent the following letter to the IS:

△ △ △

Spartacist League
Box 1377 G.P.O.
New York, N.Y. 10001

21 August 1972

International Socialists
c/o *Workers' Power*
14131 Woodward Ave.
Highland Park, Mich. 48203

Comrades:

The Spartacist League categorically denies the assertion printed in the August 1972 issue of *Workers' Power* under the heading "Comic Opera Sectarians Denounce Rank and File Caucus" that our supporters at the Labor for Peace Conference in St. Louis, "along with the 'Vanguard Newsletter' group, denounced the one-day work stoppage proposal as reformist, and demanded instead a 'general strike until the war is over.'"

This is a groundless lie manufactured out of the whole cloth!

1) The SL did not object to the IS proposal for a one-day work stoppage itself, but objected vehemently and abstained on the opportunist attempt to incorporate this proposal into an amendment to the social-patriotic statement of policy of the bureaucratic sponsors of the conference (about which policy declaration the same issue of *Workers' Power* had not a word of criticism).

2) Nowhere in the written or verbal propaganda of the Spartacist League will you or anyone find the formulation, "for a general strike until the war is over."

This accusation has the same character as if we "immoral" bolsheviks equated your position on Vietnam with, say, the openly anti-communist and social-patriotic views of the Socialist Party-SDF, and then attributed the SP's position to you both.

We demand public retraction of your attribution of the *Vanguard Newsletter* position to us, noting instead what our position is: "For Strikes Against the War and the Wage Freeze" (from the list of demands in the 22 June 1972 *Workers Vanguard* Special Supplement, "Strike Against the War—Build a Labor Party!" distributed at the conference).

—Spartacist League

Continued from page 1

...Elections

money donors make the real decisions, the Democrats in Congress vote with the same disregard for the party "program," and the candidate is just as hypocritical as before and no more responsible to his supporters. But even such examples of futility as this attempt to reform the two-party system from within will go on being repeated until a workers' party is counterposed to liberalism.

AFL-CIO Neutrality

The official "neutrality" of the AFL-CIO leadership in the presidential elections, far from being an actual break from capitalist party politics, simply reflects the defeat of Humphrey and the old line labor-liberal machines in the national Democratic Party. Although it is a big step in the rupture of the labor-liberal alliance, which has been the backbone of the Democratic Party since Roosevelt, a new realignment within the framework of capitalist politics is still possible. While sections of the labor bureaucracy may at some time be forced into deepening this rupture by forming a labor party, at this time the aims of all wings are clearly the rebuilding of a right-wing liberal, pro-labor-bureaucracy faction in the Democratic Party and pressuring McGovern by supporting local Democratic campaigns only. Meanwhile, the more liberal wing of the bureaucracy is jumping on the McGovern bandwagon.

As usual, the "left" groups divide neatly along the lines of the various sections of the labor bureaucracy and capitalist class which they are tailing after. The ideologues of the old social-democracy (Socialist Party-SDF/League for Industrial Democracy) have been idolizing AFL-CIO head Meany, and lost in pushing Boeing Aircraft's Senator Jackson for President, but now debate giving support for McGovern. The Communist Party, which unconditionally supports McGovern, does so through orienting to the "progressive" wing of the bureaucracy, headed by Woodcock of the UAW and Wurf of AFSCME. Although nominally running its own campaign in the elections, the CP, like the "progressive" bureaucrats, sees McGovern as a clear "lesser evil" and beating Nixon as the main task. This remains unchanged despite the brief and belated admission by the *Daily World* that McGovern is "vacillating—even on the war" ("Send Nixon Packing—the People's Goal For November," 18 August). Much fancy footwork is required in week after week of *Daily World* articles to explain to the "progressive" allies why the Communist "campaign" does not actually threaten the anti-Nixon front, and to the radicals in the CP's youth group, YWLL, and elsewhere why working inside the two parties of capitalism is really part of the same strategy as running independent Communist candidates. Although the CP, which seems a bit surprised at its own new-found viability, is recruiting youth who in some sense want to be "revolutionary," its basic political strategy of aiding the "liberals" against the "reactionaries" within the spectrum of capitalist politics has not changed since it was instrumental in preventing the development of a labor party and tying labor to the Democrats under Roosevelt in the thirties and forties.

"Workers" League Cretinism

On the other side, orienting toward the more conservative central core of the trade union bureaucracy, stands the vastly smaller, more impotent and therefore more frenzied Workers League of Tim Wohlforth, an ostensibly "Trotskyist" sect. While the CP excuses its role by accusing Meany and Abel of siding with Nixon "reaction," the Workers League angrily accuses the CP of "adapting" to the progressive wing of the trade union bureaucracy and instead seeks to "push" Meany and I. W. Abel of the Steelworkers into forming a labor party, all the while denying the right-wing political character of the central AFL-CIO leadership. Thus the WL's opportunism, which has been carefully nurtured over long years of adapting to every conceivable element, including cops, black nationalists and "progressive"

continued on next page

WORKERS VANGUARD

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trade union bureaucrats, has now culminated in *uncritical* pressure on George Meany himself, the arch-reactionary and anti-communist who has typified and led the U.S. labor aristocracy through one of its most conservative and wretched pro-imperialist phases, since the purges of the McCarthy period.

The character of all trade union bureaucrats, including Meany, is contradictory: they are simultaneously workers' leaders *and* agents of the capitalist class within the labor movement. While it is thus perfectly possible that some of them *may* form a labor party out of desperation if caught between implacable rank-and-file militancy and attack from all sectors of the capitalist

what circumstances, under what guidance, and for what purposes that party would be created."

—On the Labor Party Question
in America, 1932

Although this was written six years before Trotsky urged his U.S. supporters to take up the slogan for a labor party, he insisted then that it had to be fought for on the basis of the Transitional Program. Would the Workers League support a "labor party" whose purpose was to route the workers back into capitalist politics by capturing the Wallace vote with racist demagoguery, running Henry Jackson for president, preventing all wheat shipments to the Soviet Union and bombing North Vietnam back into the Stone Age? Apparently, they would.

But *Trotskyists* fight for a working-class program and for a labor party, not for a reformist labor party. The labor party demand is a tactic for overcoming the huge gap between the objective need for organized working-class political leadership and the relative weakness of the subjectively revolutionary forces. It is not an objective historic necessity which the bureaucracy will inevitably be forced to implement *for* the workers. It does not stand above the real strug-

gle to implement both it and a working class program.

SWP Reformism

Unlike the CP and WL, the reformist Socialist Workers Party has been left out in the cold by the departure of its erstwhile reformist allies to the Democratic Party. Indeed these feminist, black nationalist and anti-war reformists from the SWP's various single-issue fronts *are* the "new face" of the Democratic Party. Completely caught in its own trap, the SWP has based its whole program on building petty-bourgeois, single-issue protest movements which are "acceptable to capitalist politicians" and which (sometimes forcibly) "exclude revolutionaries," yet now hypocritically accuses the CP electoral coalition of these sins! (*Militant*, 21 April 1972). The SWP thinks of its "independent" pressure movements as having demands which "cannot be achieved within the capitalist system," yet they are at a loss to explain why virtually all the leaders of the single-issue abortion repeal, peace and nationalist-reformist movements are now quite comfortably pushing their "demands" from within the two-party system.

The SWP presidential campaign is unsupportable because, while it also mentions a labor party and is not now directly acting as a pressure group *within* the formal bourgeois political framework, it is nevertheless completely subordinated to reformist, single-issue protest politics—"a self-determination for everyone" line empty of class content, i.e., profoundly petty-bourgeois. *Nowhere* does the SWP intervene to struggle for a working-class orientation or program for these movements. It is thus quite natural that, lacking a unifying working-class perspective, these movements "unify" as isolated pressure groups within Democratic Party capitalist politics. Although this tendency has had a tremendous erosion effect on the SWP's mass arenas and slowed its growth rate, both of which were built up during the heyday of petty-bourgeois protest politics in the late sixties, the party shows no signs of searching through the Trotsky in its closet for the answers.

Build a Movement for a Labor Party

The only course open to socialist and labor militants in the 1972 election is to work for the creation of an organized movement for a labor party in the trade unions, based on militant caucuses and the transitional program. The struggle for an independent party of labor, while it may recruit some trade union leaders, *must* be based on a rank-and-file movement to replace the reformist bureaucracy with a revolutionary leadership, since it is this bureaucracy which maintains capitalist politics in the unions. An important part of this groundwork will be local campaigns run by the trade unions with their own candidates and calling for a break with all capitalist politicians and for a nationwide movement for a labor party. This call must be based on a working-class political program, including breaking state wage controls, defending the Vietnamese Revolution in the context of general opposition to American imperialism, workers' control of industry and a workers' government. ■



Guardian, 7 September 1968

1968: Anti-war protesters jeer National Guardsmen at demonstrations outside Democratic Party Convention in Chicago.

class, it is inconceivable for them not to exhaust *all* avenues of conciliation within capitalism first, and then to think twice. The *Meany* bureaucracy will *not* form a labor party, just as William Green's AFL refused to organize industrial unions in the thirties. A split would have to occur, with some elements becoming convinced that they must form a labor party in order to prevent leadership of the workers from passing to the communists. Such a conviction moved John L. Lewis to form the CIO.

Program Is the Key

While it is true that a labor party is now a tremendous defensive need of the trade unions under conditions of the crisis and hostility of the two bourgeois parties, enhancing the propagandistic importance of the slogan, it cannot be considered outside the context of its *program* and *objective thrust*. Meany and Abel have made clear the racist, pro-war and anti-communist program they would push on the labor party the WL's *Bulletin* says they are thinking about (17 July, 24 July). Yet the *Bulletin* completely refrains from challenging them on it. Trotsky had a different orientation toward this problem:

"I will never assume the responsibility to affirm abstractly and dogmatically that the creation of a 'labor party' would be a 'progressive step' even in the United States because I do not know under



Associated Press

1972: Safely co-opted anti-war forces cheer McGovern inside Democratic Party Convention in Miami.

Postal Workers Sold Out by CWA Merger Move

NEW ORLEANS—The leadership of the American Postal Workers Union (APWU) rammed a resolution through its national convention here authorizing itself to enter merger negotiations with the Communication Workers of America (CWA). By their haste to align themselves with the CWA bureaucracy, the APWU leadership indicates its growing anxiety about the possibility of rank-and-file revolts against union complicity with the attacks on postal workers' conditions being made as part of Nixon's plan to reorganize the Post Office.

While delegates suspicious of the merger proposal were gathering at all the microphones, and before amendments to the resolution were even voted on, President Francis S. Filbey accepted a motion to move the previous question and declared all debate out of order. In the resulting parliamentary confusion, Filbey ruled that the merger resolution had passed and quickly adjourned the session. The way is now clear for the amalgamation of the 300,000-member APWU with the CWA (550,000 members), since the latter passed a surprise motion for the merger at its convention last June (see *WV* No. 10).

Bureaucratic Unity

The APWU and CWA bureaucracies are not interested in increasing the workers' strength through trade union unity, but in providing themselves with a larger and more invulnerable bureaucratic structure from which to defy the increasingly rebellious membership of both unions. Although historically the role of *splitting* the unions has often fallen to reformist bureaucracies which desire to break up large, powerful combinations of militant workers, *unity* is not an end in itself which can be approached unconditionally, without consideration of its purpose. As in the recent abortive proposal for unity of the ILA with the ILWU, followed by ILWU-Teamster unity moves (*WV* No. 6) the need of the workers for unity in the struggle against their oppressors is not served by the "unity" of bureaucrats who are *looking for another gimmick to betray that struggle*.

Postal workers face a crisis as the Postal Service ruthlessly proceeds with its plan of a 25% reduction in the work force. Early retirement and a hiring freeze policy have been used in an attempt to get around no-lay-off provisions in the national contract. To further weaken the union, the Postal Service has begun hiring temporary, non-union casuals to fill job openings formerly held by union members. Never considering strike action, the APWU leadership's only response has been to meekly submit the grievances to arbitration.

Considerable dissatisfaction was manifested on the convention floor. A proposed per capita tax boost was overwhelmingly defeated amidst general criticism of the union leadership. Resolutions for a labor party and boycotting of war industries were offered by a radical representative of a small local in California. In general, the California delega-

tion seemed most consistently in opposition to the APWU leadership.

On several occasions rulings of the chair were overruled by massive standing votes of the delegates. Several times proceedings were briefly held up by jeering and booing directed against President Filbey. The positions of the leaders were secure, however, since they had been safely elected ahead of time through a mail ballot referendum!

This is a typical example of the use of the referendum in union politics, and it should be a lesson to the United National Caucus, a small group of radicals in the UAW who want to see the officers of that union elected by referendum in order to improve democracy. No matter how tightly controlled the conventions are now, they are bound to be more so if the bureaucracy is secure from the threat of being tossed out of office by the delegates. The real decisions, and especially changes, are necessarily made at delegated conventions where debate is possible, not in the inevitably leadership-controlled referendums. It is a complete denial of democracy if a leadership which does not reflect the will of a convention can continue in office, as happened in the UAW in 1944 on the key issue of the World War II no-strike pledge.

There was virtually no discussion of political issues such as the war in Vietnam, racial discrimination or the oppression of women. However, hundreds of delegates did respond enthusiastically to an appeal for solidarity from the Amalgamated Clothing Workers, which is striking Farah Company. Delegates formed a massive picket line in front of New Orleans' largest department stores, urging a boycott of Farah pants.

Spartacist League was the only organized political tendency visibly in attendance at the conference. *Workers Vanguard* sold very well.

FINAL REPORT IN — SUB DRIVE SUCCESS

The final results of the *Workers Vanguard* subscription drive are in. Not only was the drive a success with 601 one-year subs being sold, but 200 subs to the Revolutionary Communist Youth's *Newsletter* were taken out at the same time. And the subs sold are of clear-cut political value. The great bulk are going to people who are in the process of being drawn closer to our aims and involvement in our activity, especially young workers, radical students and other militants.

The Boston comrades did well in the drive and plan to resume a local sub campaign this Fall as well. Chicago made the poorest showing, being overtaken by industrial responsibilities part way through the drive. Of the smaller areas Washington D.C. and New Orleans also made a good showing, the latter on a well organized basis.

Among individual comrades, Keith of Los Angeles sold the most with 31 1/2 points—*WV* subs counting a full point and *RCY Newsletter* subs a half point each. The runner-up was Bruce of New York with 23 1/2 points. At the forthcoming Spartacist League National Conference the winner will be presented with his choice from



Delegates to Postal Workers Convention in New Orleans hold mass picket in solidarity with striking clothing workers.

All political discussion was geared to harnessing the postal workers to the capitalist two-party system, with the convention ultimately endorsing McGovern. Filbey and his lieutenants spoke constantly about depending on "our friends" among the capitalist politicians. No opposition voice was raised to point out that while Filbey and his gang may indeed be friends with the bosses' representatives, the masses of workers can expect no favors from their class enemies.

Discontented forces at the APWU convention were fragmented and uncoordinated. The formation of a militant caucus is needed to give principled leadership to these forces, to expose the class-collaborationist role of the union bureaucracy, and to provide an analysis of the capitalist state. To make a break from the economist trade unionism which inevitably recreates bureaucracy, these political points must be

the core of the caucus program, incorporated as demands for unconditional opposition to Nixon's privatization schemes and workers control of the Post Office, defense of the Vietnamese Revolution in the context of general opposition to American imperialism, against all capitalist politicians and for a labor party based on the trade unions and a workers' government. Such a caucus would also fight for a sharp reduction in the work week with no loss in pay and new hiring to replace management's slashing of the work force; the closed shop and union control of hiring throughout the Post Office; an end to the referendum elections in the union and opposition to the phony merger. Thus armed with the transitional program, such a caucus could lead the workers to an understanding that their problems ultimately can be solved only by overthrowing the entire system of capitalist wage slavery. ■

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West Coast NPAC

SWP Opens Door for McGovern

LOS ANGELES—The "Emergency Anti-war Convention" (21-23 July) of the National Peace Action Coalition (NPAC) made clear that the popular front eagerly built by the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) is now being funneled directly into the Democratic Party. The fruit of the SWP's "independent" anti-war movement is an army of non-class-conscious youth for McGovern.

Bourgeois Defeatism

It was only a year ago that the SWP sealed in blood its alliance with the ruling class by violently expelling members of the Spartacist League/Revolutionary Communist Youth and Progressive Labor/SDS for protesting the presence of Democratic Senator Hartke and vigorously jeering red-baiter UAW bureaucrat Victor Reuther at the July 1971 NPAC Convention. Since that time the SWP/NPAC pop front has blossomed considerably in "respectability" as a result of a wave of bourgeois defeatism which swept the U.S. after the North Vietnamese offensive of March-April 1972. It was this wave of bourgeois defeatism and pacifism which suddenly boosted McGovern into the national spotlight and Democratic nomination. While he is no more a pacifist than Richard Nixon, McGovern represents the more far-sighted American imperialists who see the possibility of making peace and maintaining imperialist influence in Asia through a deal with the Stalinists such as the 1954 Geneva accords. It is precisely because of the threat of this kind of "peace" that revolutionaries must fight for military victory to the NLF/DRV and a communist Indochina!

In spite of Nixon's diplomatic successes in Peking and Moscow, which allowed him to blockade North Vietnam with impunity, he has not succeeded in ending the war, and this continues to feed the split in the ruling class and hence the McGovern forces. McGovern is further buttressed by the class-collaborationist Stalinists in Hanoi, who have subordinated their military campaigns to the Moscow and Peking bureaucracies and the bourgeois U.S. peace movement, thereby throwing away the opportunity which existed in April-May to thoroughly destroy the panicked Thieu forces and come to power. The DRV/NLF still seeks a coalition government, minus only Thieu, instead of a communist revolution.

SWP's Anti-war "Success"

The NPAC pop front has picked up much support from "big names" in the Democratic Party and trade union bureaucracy as a result of bourgeois defeatism, thus fulfilling the SWP's concept of "success" for the anti-war movement: a coalition of working-class and bourgeois forces under a bourgeois program. The *Militant* (14 July) boasted, for instance, that the NPAC Convention was endorsed by California State Senate majority leader George Moscone, among others. The NPAC national steering committee includes Bronx Borough President Robert Abrams, Teamster vice-president Harold Gibbons, Senator Vance Hartke, Brigadier General Hugh B. Hester, Betty Friedan of NOW, Sanford Gottlieb of SANE, and leading representatives of Business Executives Move for Peace, College Young Democratic Clubs and Youth for McGovern.

During the opening night rally on 21 July, chairman John T. Williams of the Teamsters interspersed the speakers with telegrams of support from "distinguished" Democrats, including McGovern, Moscone and Alan Cranston. The McGovern telegram read in part, "Through the strength which comes from united work and concern we will end the senseless loss of human lives and stop this tragic war." No doubt McGovern appreciates the "united work" of the ex-

Trotskyist SWP during the election period!

The rally featured Bobby Seale of the Black Panther Party (BPP), which recently endorsed NPAC. This fits well in the BPP's jump into reformism, including turns toward the black church, black capitalism, and Democrats such as Shirley Chisholm.

The split in the ruling class over tactics in Indochina has its reflection in the trade union bureaucracy as well. Thus NPAC has collected endorsements from some of the liberal bureaucrats, and another featured speaker was Harold Gibbons, a Teamster vice-president who opposes Teamster President Fitzsimmons' endorsement of Nixon only because he is pro-Democratic.

SL/RCY: The Only Communist Opposition

The decisive political battles took place on Saturday, 22 July. There were ten resolutions representing virtually every tendency on the left (except for the Communist Party, which maintains its own pop front, the PCPJ, which refused to back this convention for the stated reason that NPAC is "racist" for not endorsing the PRG 7-point peace plan). It is a devastating fact that except for the SL/RCY, virtually the entire American left has been swept into the NPAC and PCPJ pop fronts. The SL/RCY alone called for smashing NPAC through the expulsion of the bourgeoisie from the anti-war movement, and was thus the only principled communist opposition at the conference, in addition to being the only significant opposition force besides the pro-McGovern wing.

The SL/RCY leaflet "Smash the Pop Front!" detailed the collusion of the Workers League, International Socialists, National Caucus of Labor Committees and others in the construction of the SWP's class-collaborationist coalition. The leaflet ended with a six-point proposal:

1. For the unconditional exclusion of the bourgeoisie and their political representatives from the anti-war movement!
2. For the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of all U.S. forces from Indochina! For unconditional military support and victory for the DRV/NLF! All Indochina must go communist!
3. Labor strikes against the war and against the freeze!
4. Control prices not wages. Union misleaders stay off the Pay Board!
5. Fight economic protectionism! For international working-class solidarity!
6. For a labor party based on the trade unions!

The "Left" Tail of NPAC

All the other resolutions were attempts to modify the course of NPAC without raising the question of the presence of the bourgeoisie, thereby reflecting the deepening entrenchment of the "left" groups in NPAC. The Workers League (WL), which openly endorsed the NPAC expulsion of communists a year ago, introduced a resolution calling on NPAC to "demand" that "the American labor movement...immediately call a Congress of Labor for the purpose of launching an independent labor party for the 1972 election..."

The WL intervention lacked the fulsome denunciations of Stalinism which have filled their previous resolutions to the pop front, and was generally more subdued than ever so as not to upset their new-found coziness with the SWP, which they call on workers to vote for in November "as a critical part of breaking the trade unions and the entire working class from the two capitalist parties" (*Bulletin*, 17 January 1972). Only about six WL supporters intervened, and they gave only one half-hearted speech for their resolution in the plenary.

Progressive Labor/SDS, which late last year dropped its previous correct criticism of class collaboration in order to enter and endorse NPAC, presented a pitifully low-level resolution, "Stop Genocide," which urged that, "this convention resolve that any demonstrations organized by NPAC will stress the racist and genocidal nature of the war in Vietnam." The resolution also asked endorsement for the "anti-racism bill," a piece of reformism which SDS tried to get the Democratic Party in Miami to accept as part of its program! It includes such items as imprisonment of any policeman "who assaults a minority person, except in provable self-defense"! Needless to say, the capitalist police always carry out their crimes in "self-defense." That is precisely why Lenin talked about the necessity of *dismantling* the capitalist state, not reforming it.

PL Sells Out to McGovern

PL is attempting to build a mini-pop front modelled after NPAC, and is trying to recruit some of the liberals which NPAC and McGovern have swept in. The latest issue of *New Left Notes* (26 June), circulated at the convention, contains "Two Views On McGovern." The first view states that McGovern "is worth voting for, whether as a lesser of two evils or as a positive force for change in America." The other view ends by stating, "we should either vote for McGovern or not vote at all." Outside of the unreadable *Challenge*, PL has nothing to offer in SDS and NPAC but...McGovern!

The International Socialists (IS), who have attempted to operate as a "left" caucus in NPAC without demanding the expulsion of the bourgeoisie, joined with the rabidly anti-communist "News and Letters" group to form an "Anti-War Coalition." This coalition submitted a resolution called "Freeze the War, Free the People," which left the door open for third bourgeois parties such as the unmourned Peace and Freedom Party, and backed away from demanding military victory to the DRV/NLF. A separate IS leaflet was distributed which did state, "we support the *military* victory of the NLF/PRG against U.S. imperialism" (emphasis in original), but as usual, what the IS formally called for in its own name and what it actually pushed for on the floor were two different things. Being extreme left-wing social-democrats and fundamentally anti-communist, the IS began dropping the "military victory" slogan in March-April when it looked as if the North Vietnamese offensive was succeeding (see *WV* No. 8). Now that the North Vietnamese have been beaten back, the IS again occasionally raises the idea. But by refusing to call on the Soviet Union to break the blockade, the IS back-handedly accepts the U.S. blockade of North Vietnam and renders meaningless the slogan for military victory.

The National Caucus of Labor Committees (NCLC) submitted their "Working Class Alternatives in the Election Year," which they presented to the SMC last February (see *WV* No. 7), but now with a new supplemental leaflet attached. The supplement made clear again that NCLC approves of the SWP's pop-front strategy and merely opposes the embarrassing fact in particular cases of open Democratic candidates like McGovern coming into it. As a solution to the embarrassment which the SWP faces, NCLC proposed that NPAC negotiate with the SWP to "modify" the Jenness/Pulley (SWP) campaign program so that NCLC could endorse it "for the sake of the principle of 'independent working-class political action'." In effect, the NCLC asked the SWP to negotiate with itself. This is intended to create the facade of a "principled" NPAC united front approach to the elections, but, as is well known to the SWP, the NCLC is already committed to the unmodifiable NPAC pop front. Michael Tinkler of Philadelphia NCLC sits on the NPAC Steering Committee.

McGovernites Come to Collect on NPAC's "Independence"

Despite the million-and-one ties between NPAC and the Democratic Party, the SWP maintains the fiction that NPAC is "independent" so that the SWP can hang onto a figment of radicalism. The McGovern forces came to the convention to collect on the real meaning of NPAC "independence" by making more formal the connection between NPAC and the Democrats. A resolution was circulated early in the convention calling for the explicit endorsement of McGovern and urging NPAC to work for McGovern's election.

As we have consistently pointed out since the SWP launched its single-issue anti-war movement in 1965, there can be no "independence" from the bourgeoisie without a revolutionary socialist program based on the working class; but such a program was consistently suppressed by the SWP because it is "divisive," that is, it drives away the bourgeoisie!

Thus throughout Saturday, the SWP had to fight on two flanks: feverishly attempting to beat off the McGovern forces on formal endorsement, and at the same time having to answer SL/RCY attacks with gloating statements about the "success" of NPAC. It became clear in workshop straw votes and in the evening plenary that the McGovern forces did not have the votes to push through their resolution, so they began a retreat by stages. SWP leaders prevented their own followers from cutting off discussion, so that the

continued on page 10

"TROTSKYIST" LONELY HEARTS CLUB

What Is VANGUARD NEWSLETTER?

In the July-August issue of *Vanguard Newsletter* (VNL) there appears a letter from the "Committee for Rank and File Caucuses" (CRFC) challenging the Spartacist League to publicly defend our statement that VNL/CRFC leader David Fender called the cops to open up the "public" Workers League forum at the St. Louis Labor for Peace Conference. The CRFC letter charged the SL with a deliberate "misrepresentation of fact" and challenged us to a "public forum" to debate the incident in question. This is the first time in the SL's eight-year history as a tendency that the accuracy and integrity of our press—despite its highly polemical, frank and revealing character—has been so challenged. We accept the CRFC's challenge and are prepared to confront the CRFC before any body in the socialist and working-class movement. We want to make known throughout the socialist and labor movement that this erstwhile proletarian revolutionist, David Fender, called upon the class enemy to decide a struggle within the workers' movement.

CRFC and WL Vie for United Front with the Cops

The material to which the CRFC letter objects is two sentences in a leaflet titled "CP/TUAD Prepares Betrayal with Mass Exclusion." The leaflet stated, "...at the Labor for Peace Conference last week the Stalinophobic WL cowardly excluded all other tendencies from their allegedly 'public' meeting. Demonstrating further non-proletarian means of struggle, and a complete misunderstanding of the Leninist theory of the state, the WL and CRFC called the cops on each other, the WL to guard their meeting, the CRFC to open it up." The next paragraph, also quoted in the CRFC letter, went on to explain why the working-class movement must not seek to "use the capitalist cops or courts to enforce 'democracy' within the labor movement."

At the Labor for Peace Conference in St. Louis, the Workers League had called a forum at St. Louis University sponsored in the name of a UAW "rank and file" caucus. The meeting was publicly advertised but the WL followed its by now standard practice of physically excluding opponent tendencies from the "public" meeting. Those excluded were standing outside the barred meeting room, including supporters of the International Socialists, Socialist Workers Party, CRFC and five supporters of the Spartacist League. Fender announced, "I'm going to get us into this meeting," and left the meeting room area. Then according to the CRFC's version, Fender went to dispute a WLER over the question of exclusion before a campus administrator and in the presence of security guards. On returning to the meeting room area, Fender stated that he had "countered" the WL's arguments. He had indeed! Shortly after that, the campus administrator accompanied by an armed guard approached the WL leadership and informed them that exclusionist meetings were against the rules. Fender stood right behind the administrator and guard, eager to enter the now opened meeting. All the other groups present were likewise prepared to attend the WL forum under campus cop auspices, except for the Spartacist comrades who argued heatedly against use of campus cops as arbitrators; one ISer called our comrades "purists" for our position that we would not touch such a meeting with a ten-foot pole. The WL then transferred the meeting to a private apartment.

The CRFC's letter is a smokescreen by crucial omission. It piously protests, "The position of the CRFC and its component organizations on the question of the police and bourgeois legal interference in the workers' movement is the same as that of the SL." The letter claims that Fender protested to the campus administration only to prevent the guards throwing the CRFC out of the building. This claim is given the lie by the facts, which the letter conceals. The supposedly unintended result of Fender's protest was the intervention by the administrator and campus cop to force the WL to open the forum. If this had not been precisely the result which Fender was seeking, wouldn't he of course have joined the

Spartacist supporters in refusing to enter the meeting? But Fender and Jim Hays of CRFC/VNL followed along behind the administration's armed guard to enter the meeting!

Origins of the Turner "Tendency"

The lengthy and hysterical (and frequently totally fabricated) attacks on the SL in recent issues of VNL, and the demand for a confrontation over the St. Louis incident, require us to introduce working-class militants to the VNL grouping and its history. VNL was launched by one Harry Turner following his departure, along with one supporter (his long-time friend Hugh Fredricks), from the Spartacist League after involvement in a faction fight in the SL in 1968.

In 1968 a liquidationist opposition arose in the SL, based on a retreat from Trotskyism in favor of a workerist impulse. Despite Turner's self-inflating claims to be the leader of that opposition, its real leader was Kay Ellens, who built a thinly-veiled semi-syndicalist faction, sucked in Turner, and then split with nine people without even informing Turner and his lone supporter.

The immediate issue in the faction fight was the fate of the SL's early efforts to build a transitional organization, the Militant Labor Civil Rights Committee, designed to fight the special oppression of black workers. Turner and other members of the incipient minority, including Ellens, had been involved in directing the MLCRC efforts, and decided to concentrate on a mass leafletting campaign directed at the NYC hospital workers' union, where the SL had two comrades. The MLCRC was not a special project for some people to "do their own thing," but was treated as an SL activity; virtually without exception every member of the New York local distributed MLCRC leaflets one or two mornings a week in front of selected hospitals. When the two hospital workers defected from the SL in the direction of anarcho-Maoist street confrontationism (along with one Bob Ross, now a component of the CRFC!), the MLCRC's activities became a sterile exercise in empty propagandism unsupported by an SL fraction in the union. The Ellens-Turner opposition insisted the work was still viable, counterposing fake agitation to the SL's perspective of direct political confrontation with other working-class currents designed to cohere the most conscious vanguard elements around Trotskyism. In particular, the kind of agitation advocated by Ellens-Turner deliberately avoided attacks on black nationalist ideology then dominant among black radicals and reflected in a definite mood among the black masses. The minority repeatedly insisted that the indefinite continuation of MLCRC, despite the loss of any party fraction in the union, had great possibilities, and that to discontinue it meant the abandonment of any perspective for recruiting black workers.

Ellens seized on the MLCRC as a good issue for building her semi-syndicalist faction, pulling in Turner on the basis of his impatience and his subjective stake in MLCRC, which he believed was the manifestation in the flesh of a "Memorandum on the Negro Struggle" he had written a year before. Spokesmen for the SL majority repeatedly charged Turner with being in a rotten bloc with Ellens in a faction whose real politics were workerism, clandestinity, accommodation to black nationalism and emulation of the Voix Ouvrière group in France, and which had an immediate split perspective. Turner insisted that he was the leader of the faction, that it adhered to the basic orientation and program of the SL, and that it did not have a split perspective. Immediately thereafter, the nine members of the Ellens faction precipitously split from the SL, without even informing Turner, to carry out its workerist program. The grouping promptly moved to a Midwest industrial center and went underground to attempt to conquer the proletarian masses, adopting political positions appropriate to its former minorityite stance: advocacy of strike-breaking in the NYC teachers' union strike in the name of "community control" and characterization of the defamed workers' states as state capitalist. Turner and his supporter found themselves unceremoniously dumped

by the faction which Turner was supposedly leading! Turner declared himself the "real" minority and the other nine "frictional losses." Completely discredited by the confirmation of the majority's characterization of his rotten bloc with a semi-syndicalist faction, Turner got himself suspended, then resigned from the SL.

The subsequent political "evolution" of Turner can be directly traced to this experience. Pushed into factional opposition in the SL by impatience, grotesquely used and discarded by Ellens as a figurehead for a syndicalist split-oriented faction, feeling trapped in the SL and then all alone outside it, Turner's whole subsequent course has been a series of sordid attempts to find some "political" basis—any basis—to justify his factional maneuverings in and ignominious departure from the SL.

Turner Looks for a Home

After leaving the SL, Turner cast about looking for something to join. His first impulse was to re-unite with the Ellens group. But knowing that Turner would never give up his comfortable life situation to enter a factory, Ellens rejected his overtures. Furious, he responded with an "open letter" to the Ellens group (29 November 1968):

"We have been aware for some time of Kay's lack of scruple, of candor—speaking plainly of downright dishonesty. We can quote you chapter and verse...such as the crude falsehoods retailed at local meetings...."

Having unintentionally admitted previously covering up for his co-factionalist's lies, Turner went on to denounce Ellens' "fetishistic attitude toward recruiting through accretion at the factory level" and her undergroundist orientation—as the SL Majority had insisted all along! Of his own perspectives he wrote, "You patronizingly inform us that our initial and tentative consideration of preliminary involvement in a loose gathering of radicals to try to win some additional cadre 'merely postpones the real tasks'...."

After being rejected by Ellens, Turner and his supporter joined the Labor Committee of L. Marcus. Recall that the two main elements of Turner's opposition were overwhelming organizational concentration on the labor movement and single-minded agitation around the oppression of black workers. The Labor Committee, however, explicitly maintains the elitist position that academically trained intellectuals can conquer the working class without implantation in industry and trade union work; moreover, the LC regards the black movement as simply divisive of working-class unity and opposes in principle the raising of programmatic demands against the special oppression of blacks. While Turner was in the LC, one of its leaders attacked the anarcho-Maoist wing of SDS in an article in the press of the pro-war Socialist Party at a time when the instruments of bourgeois public opinion were waging a hysterical campaign against SDS. When SLers attended an LC meeting to raise a motion condemning the LC for this action, Turner abstained. Turner's conduct in the LC was determined by a desire to get close to the Workers League, which Turner had already begun chasing, and which had a fraction in the LC.

Groveling Letter to Healy

Despite his comic-opera overtures to Ellens and Marcus, Turner saw his main chance in Gerry Healy's International Committee and its American group, the Workers League of Tim Wohlforth. While in the SL, Turner had written savage denunciations of Healy's "International" and the WL. Following the expulsion of the Spartacist delegation from the 1966 IC conference, Turner had written (letter to Healy, 30 April 1966): "You wanted an international after the manner of Stalin's Comintern, permeated with servility at one pole and authoritarianism on the other."

Referring to the economist program of the Workers League's short-lived front group, Trade Unionists for a Labor Party, which deliberately omitted any mention of the fight against racial oppression (as well as opposition to the Vietnam

continued on next page

war), Turner had denounced the WL for making "a 'left' adaptation to the prevailing white chauvinism in the working class" ("Whither the Spartacist League," 7 July 1968).

But only a few months after leaving the SL, Turner was chasing Healy and the WL! On 10 January 1969 Turner sent a classic letter of recantation to Healy in which he capitulated on virtually every point. He wrote:

"Why wasn't I able to see it [that the Spartacist tendency was "a petty-bourgeois personality cult"] at the time? Why was I originally drawn to Robertson's group, and away from Wohlforth and Mueller in 1963? Subjective factors play a large part in behavior, of course...I tended to react in simple Pavlovian fashion to your intervention in the RT...I also reacted quite superficially, empirically and parochially."

In his desire to become a Healyite, Turner denounced the SL position against the Chinese "Cultural Revolution," reverting to his original support for the Maoist Red Guards, and stated only the mildest of criticisms of the WL's genuine adaptation to white chauvinism:

"As to the Negro question, the WL's program... is one which we can support. However we feel that the program does not sufficiently orientate toward the increasingly militant black workers...."

On his new-found commitment to the WL, he wrote: "when we examine the WL, we find a performance in keeping with its professed desire to build a Leninist party in the U.S.!"

Despite Turner's fulsome grovelling, Healy insisted on thoroughly demeaning his former opponent by demanding that Turner give up his position on the black question and fully embrace the WL's position. Turner turned away from the WL, although without giving up hopes for an eventual reconciliation with international Healyism.

The black question continued to be a stumbling block for Turner. While in the SL Turner claimed agreement with the SL position that U.S. blacks are a doubly oppressed color caste, but not long after leaving (*VNL*, November 1969) he caved in to black nationalist sentiment:

"Should the mass of the Black people, the vast majority of which is working class, decide on nationhood, reach the conclusion that they can no longer reside in the same national state with whites, and demand a section of the U.S. for a separate state, we would support their demand...."

This position has nothing whatsoever in common with Leninism. For a Leninist, the question of whether a group is a nation is not determined by how much its members want to secede but by the existence of a separate political economy in embryo within the oppressor nation. In a frenzy of white guilt, Turner entirely does away with the Leninist criteria in order to assure black nationalists that if they really want to be a nation, he will certainly give them permission. If Turner believes that U.S. black people possess the objective requirements for becoming an independent national state, then his position is simply patronizing; for a nation, self-determination is a *right* which Leninists must unconditionally support, not

a proof of Turner's generosity in giving them permission.

Turner's First Recruit

Rebuffed in his attempts to find a home in another organization, Turner formed Vanguard Newsletter in June 1969 on the following basis:

"We begin, in effect...as a discussion group. It is our hope that agreement on principle and program will be forged, so that a democratic-centralist organization will emerge from the circle. We invite all those interested in discussion to contact us."

VNL remains a catch-all literary discussion group "hoping" to achieve "agreement on principle and program" in the great by and by, while posturing as a hard Leninist formation. We will see what kind of political animals accepted Turner's invitation.

Robert Sherwood was expelled from the SL for signing a "Negotiations Now" leaflet, thus breaking SL discipline to cross the class line. At about the same time, he legally emigrated to Canada to avoid the draft, thus violating our policy that when drafted, proletarian revolutionaries enter the army to carry the anti-war struggle to conscripted working-class youth. Sherwood then joined the Workers League and became leader of its Canadian "section," making a mockery of the WL's public position against draft resistance. When *Spartacist* denounced the WL's hypocritical opportunism over Sherwood, the WL reacted with hysteria, terming us "the fingerman of the world capitalists," falsely claiming that the references to Sherwood's draft-dodging would jeopardize him legally. Significantly, this archtypically Stalinist slander occurred in the same issue of the *Bulletin* as a gloating report on the Turner split based on documents he gave them.

While as usual using Aesopian formulations, Turner solidarized with the WL-Sherwood accusations (*VNL*, February 1970):

"Should one judge the SL's actions in regard to Sherwood as isolated incidents...or even as a vindictive, perhaps only semi-conscious wish for harassment of such opponents by the repressive apparatus of the capitalist state? We have ruled out the first alternative...We have informed others...of our belief that the latter possibilities are most probable."

Turner had been a member of the SL Political Bureau when the *Spartacist* denouncing Sherwood and the WL appeared (March-April 1968). He made no objections at the time and presumably supported the article. A year and a half later, Turner is accusing the SL leadership—of which he was then a part!—of turning political opponents over to the cops. The apparent mystery is solved by the fact that in late 1969 Sherwood had a falling out with the WL and transformed the Canadian WL into the Toronto VNL Committee. To recruit one slimy opportunist and draft-dodger to boot, Turner was prepared to retroactively make himself a "capitalist fingerman."

NYC Police Strike

Under normal circumstances and with an eye on the record, most organizations claiming to be revolutionary can present their politics as principled and plausible. The real test of an organization's revolutionary capacity is its reaction to unexpected or complex social struggles (e.g., the Chinese "Cultural Revolution," the 1968 NYC teachers' strike, the present conflict in Ulster). Such a test was the 1970 New York City police strike.

The WL predictably embraced the cops as a militant wing of the working class. While VNL dissociated itself from the WL's extreme rantings (without naming the WL), it put forth the *fundamental programmatic element* of the WL position—labor movement support for a police strike victory (*VNL*, January 1971):

"The rank and file of the entire labor movement must demand that their leaderships enter into a united front and a binding commitment for a *general strike* in the event that either strike-breaking weapon is resorted to by the City."

The strike reflected the growing sense of independent esprit by the cops and hostility to what they considered the "permissiveness" of politicians and jurists toward black, Puerto Rican and student militants. A victory for the police strike, particularly defying the National Guard, would have removed the tenuous fetters of bourgeois legality from the armed fist of the state, allowing that armed fist to rise above the traditional bourgeois state in bonapartist fashion, while remaining the guardian of the capitalist class. A victorious police strike would inevitably mean the unleashing of unrestrained racist terror against the black ghettos. It should be noted that

VNL's critical support to the police strike took place a few months before VNL solidarized with the Newton wing of the Panthers, who would certainly have been one of the first victims of a cop victory.

Turner Chases OCI

As part of the developing split in the "International Committee" between the British Socialist Labour League and the French Organisation Communiste Internationaliste in 1971, the latter aggressively lined up international supporters on a power-bloc basis. Lacking contacts in North America, the OCI was prepared to investigate using VNL. Turner, in turn, tried to use the attraction of the OCI franchise to strengthen his domestic discussion-regroupment operation. Thus, Turner projected a fusion of VNL, the Sherwood group in Canada, the "revolutionary DeLeonist" Socialist Forum and the Communist Tendency, a group led by David Fender which had recently split from the SWP.

Turner's appetites for the OCI franchise were clearly reflected in the September and October 1971 issues of *VNL*. Turner became a self-appointed attorney for the Partido Obrero Revolucionario of Bolivia, the OCI's ally against the SLL/WL:

"We do not consider it permissible to lump the POR with the Stalinists and Pabloists as does Tim Wohlforth...We believe that the Bolivian comrades made serious errors...It is only by learning from their mistakes that the comrades of the POR can overcome them in time, can yet lead the Bolivian working class...to power."

The same issue contains an effusive, uncritical greeting to the congress of the OCI youth group: "We wish you every success in your congress and in politically arming the youth of France for the socialist revolution." (For our critique of the OCI's opportunism over Bolivia and the youth question, see *Workers Vanguard* No. 3, December 1971.)

However, the international fusion meeting, held in Canada in late September 1971, was a disaster for Turner's grandiose ambitions. The internal contradictions of Turner's motley combination exploded. Half of the VNL, i.e., Harold Robins and Bob Davis, went into "opposition" and split. Refusing to unite with the draft-dodger Sherwood, the ranks of the CT split from their political leader and spokesman, David Fender. (The CT, Robins and Davis have since transferred their allegiance to the IS.)

Naturally, the conference with the OCI representative was not reported in *VNL*. But by November, VNL's attitude toward the OCI had changed 180 degrees. In the November 1971 *VNL* we read, "By embracing Lora [head of the POR], the OCI assumes *full* responsibility for policies which led to the Bolivian defeat." The article concludes, "The Bolivian test was miserably failed by all organizations identifying with both the IC and U.Sec." Turner termed the IC left-centrist and accused the OCI as well as the SLL of gangsterism against other left-wing tendencies. Had the OCI suddenly changed its spots before the November *VNL* issue? No, what changed was Turner's scheme for using the OCI to construct his grouplet.

Turner/Fender Rotten Bloc

The OCI regroupment drive did produce another recruit for Turner: David Fender, who left the CT ranks behind in order to join VNL. Under Fender's tutelage, the CT had developed two controversial positions which they regarded as extremely important: the CT critically supported the Liu faction in the Chinese "Cultural Revolution" and called for the "proletarian military policy," trade union control of the standing army with conscription.

Fender had supported the Liu faction on the grounds that this conservative resistance on the part of the bureaucracy to the adventurist and austerity policies of Mao reflected pressure to defend the material interests of the working masses. Turner, however, had supported the Maoist Red Guards, taken in by their "anti-bureaucratic" and egalitarian rhetoric. Thus Fender and Turner have diametrically opposed positions on contemporary Chinese politics. And more significantly, since Fender joined up with Turner, *VNL* has carried no material on political revolution in a country called China, which merely contains a third of the human race. One of the hallmarks of any centrist group is profound anti-internationalism. As long as an accommodation can be reached on domestic issues, the most fundamental differences over revolutionary policy in "other" countries become merely

continued on page 10

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SWP/WONAAC Sink in Bourgeois Swamp

The decline of the petty-bourgeois women's liberation movement as it has existed for the past several years is a fact apparent to most radical activists and ostensible revolutionaries. The only organization which seems not to have assimilated this fact of life is the self-proclaimed leader of the "mass feminist movement," the Socialist Workers Party, and its youth group, the Young Socialist Alliance. This blindness may be attributed to the SWP/YSA's heavy organizational commitment to its front group, the Women's National Abortion Action Coalition. The SWP/YSA has built WONAAC as a liberal-reformist organization whose three demands aim at attracting middle-class women and their Democratic Party representatives. The SWP/YSA's desperate attempt to funnel the women's movement into the single-issue abortion repeal campaign in order to "attract the broadest possible number of women" has itself been a significant factor in the demise of the movement.

The third National Women's Conference on Abortion, held July 15-16 at Hunter College in New York under the auspices of WONAAC, surpassed the previous two in endless boring hours of petty, non-political ramblings and mindless enthusing over non-existent "victories." The fact that of the 800 women who were actually interested enough to register for this conference (less than two-thirds of the attendance at the previous conference) fewer than half remained by the second day itself bears witness to the tragic dead end to which the women's movement has come in the past few years.

The conference was fraught with evident deep rifts within the WONAAC leadership itself, finally coming to a head with the resignation of eight national coordinators and staff on the second day. Much of the criticism raised by the main oppositional grouping within WONAAC, centered around Rose Weber (one of those who eventually resigned), took the form of vicious red-baiting accusations of SWP "domination and manipulation" of WONAAC. The SWP is unable to fight red-baiting effectively because its reformist aspirations do not allow it to stand openly as communists and fight for leadership on the basis of *program*. All that the SWP has to offer is an effective organization of cadres trained to tail-end the "mass movements" it claims to lead. While the Weber grouping picked up on some key defects in WONAAC's politics and the SWP method of "leadership," the group represented a split to the right, probably headed straight back into the Democratic Party. For the most part these oppositionists are simply extending feminist and class-collaborationist principles taught them by the SWP but which the SWP itself cannot explicitly endorse because of formal residues of its past socialist traditions.

SWP/WONAAC Push Class-Collaboration

This point is demonstrated by WONAAC's empty claims of "independence" from bourgeois political parties. In the June 26 issue of the *WONAAC Newsletter* well-known SWP spokesman Kipp Dawson argued against the tactic of legislative lobbying asking: "How can women be most effective in forcing the legislators to grant the right to abortion?" Later in the article—after bragging of the support to WONAAC of such "women's liberationists" as Shirley Chisholm, Mary Lindsay and Bella Abzug—Dawson answers her question: "When thousands of women are marching in the streets for this right [abortion], legislators will sit up and take notice." A militant-sounding strategy—for the purpose of *pressuring liberal legislators*.

One reason why WONAAC has repeatedly thrown off splits to the right is the contradiction between this stated "principle of independence" from the bourgeoisie and *support* of bourgeois politicians in all but the direct electoral sense. Those trained in the feminist-reformist

WONAAC school are only being consistent when they yearn to support capitalist politicians like Abzug, whose so-called Abortion Rights Act of 1972 is being backed by WONAAC with a petition campaign. The SWP is unable to provide any political justification for the "principle of independence" besides the claim that endorsing any candidate would "narrow the coalition."

For communists the reason for a complete break with capitalist politicians lies in the understanding that the oppression of women is one of the pillars upon which the capitalist system rests. Struggles against women's oppression will be bitterly opposed by the capitalist state and its political agents. On occasion reform issues may be supported by particular politicians, but this "support" inevitably comes down to cynical manipulation to garner votes, as was amply demonstrated by the maneuverings around the abortion issue at the Democratic Convention.

Such an analysis of the nature of capitalism is well known to the ex-Marxist SWP. The SWP's rationale for this elementary betrayal is that breaking with the class enemy and its agents would prevent WONAAC from "bringing in the greatest number of women."

Abortion and the Family

Similarly with the issue of "free abortion on demand." The SWP itself has admitted that "the part of this demand that calls for *free* abortion on demand goes beyond democratic demands, raises the concept of socialization of medical care, and answers a need of the most oppressed and exploited" (*International Socialist Review*, November 1971). Yet the SWP/YSA has consistently fought against this as a demand for WONAAC, thus criminally abandoning the "need of the most oppressed and exploited" for the sake of its liberal supporters! The refusal to fight for free legal abortion in itself cuts WONAAC off from working-class women, especially the most oppressed layers of the class, who know they will have about as much chance to obtain an expensive legal abortion as they have to take a (legal) airplane trip.

In itself the issue of abortions is a *reform* demand. For revolutionaries, particular reforms which strike blows at the oppressive institutions of capitalism and increase the capacity of the working class to struggle must be supported. But the revolutionary always seeks to pose demands which transcend the capitalist framework, increase the consciousness of the exploited and oppressed of the objective need for socialist revolution as the only way to fully achieve and safeguard their needs, and lead to greater *class* organization and higher forms of struggle on the part of the working masses.

The SWP/YSA, however, has deliberately built WONAAC as a reformist organization. It has opposed adopting the "free abortion" demand which implicitly calls into question capitalist private property relations; it has fought the broadening of WONAAC's three official demands into a *program* linking up the abortion fight with the class struggle in all its aspects; it has spread illusions which directly impede the development of revolutionary consciousness. WONAAC teaches the militant women to place their trust in the class enemy and their female agents in the capitalist parties. WONAAC pushes the illusion that abortion repeal means "control of our own bodies." A woman who works a grueling eight-hour day at a meaningless job and returns to an evening of petty housework drudgery hardly has "control of her own body!"

The emancipation of women requires the destruction of capitalism. Women under capitalism are exploited as workers and doubly oppressed by the *family*, the main social bulwark of women's oppression. Achieving the right to abortion would strike a blow against the material and ideological props of the family system, but the family will not wither away until a replacement for it can be created. Socialization of household duties, only possible after the abolition of private property



Clara Zetkin, January 1918

and the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat, will open the road to the gradual replacement of the family.

Spartacist and the Women's Movement

Members of the Spartacist League and the *Women and Revolution* group intervened in the WONAAC Conference to counterpose a revolutionary proletarian strategy and program. W&R groups, based on the transitional program of the SL, have intervened in the women's movement, consistently presenting an outspoken *socialist* alternative, explicitly anti-reformist and anti-feminist. SL/W&R has insisted that the women's movement cannot go forward until it adopts a proletarian perspective and recognizes that the uniquely leading class in the socialist revolution

LESSONS FROM THE B

Toward a

Most of the ostensibly socialist organizations in the U.S. have pursued an opportunist, tail-endist policy toward the women's liberation movement. But for others, the question is seen as inherently petty-bourgeois, and the existing movement as the only possible expression of struggle against the oppression of women. Thus the Workers League has expressed contempt for the current movement and has ostentatiously abstained from participation in it. Opposition to the middle-class and feminist-reformist orientation of the existing movement does not produce abstention by revolutionaries, but rather demands energetic intervention with the correct proletarian program and strategy. For the Workers League, however, blanket condemnation of the movement is merely a cheap way to establish "proletarian" credentials. The WL denies the special oppression of women and maintains that the organization of women around resistance to their oppression simply divides the working class. Unfortunately this cynical position keys into one of the stereotypes of communists perpetrated by anti-communist feminists, who maintain that communists are not concerned with women's oppression and have no legitimate place in the movement.

In forswearing the fight against the oppression of women the Workers League once again abandons a key component of the Marxist program, developed initially by Marx and Engels themselves and later extended by the Bolshevik party and the Third International. The current women's movement, with its disdain for "male-dominated" history and Marxist theory, is as ignorant of the history of socialist work among women as is the Workers League. The historical development of communist organization and program for work among women can provide guidelines for the rebirth of a revolutionary women's movement as part of the struggle of the proletariat for state power.

Birth of the Socialist Women's Movement

The drawing of women into large-scale industry was a profoundly progressive step and laid the basis for their industrial and political organization. In many cases women were admitted into trade unions but frequently, as in the case of the Lancashire weavers in 1824, as

is the proletariat under the leadership of the vanguard party.

SL/W&R presented a motion to the Conference, "For a class line—not a sex line," which demanded the exclusion of all bourgeois politicians, male and female, from the women's liberation movement. As part of our insistence that the struggle for the emancipation of women must be seen as part of the fight of the working class for socialist revolution, the motion demanded that the Conference break with male exclusionism by allowing men who support the struggle full and equal participation. The fight for *class unity* requires intransigent opposition to male exclusionism just as it requires a relentless struggle against male chauvinist backwardness, on the basis of a transitional program which fights against the special oppression of women as part of a struggle for the needs of the class as a whole. Elements of the W&R program include: equal pay for equal work, free quality medical care for all, union organization of the unorganized, strikes against the Vietnam war, the building of a labor party to fight for a workers' government.

Feminism vs. Communism

The kind of "leadership" offered by the SWP was exactly what the women's movement did *not* need to break out of its headlong plunge into impotent reformism. The movement emerged in the 1960's out of the petty-bourgeois student movement—the New Left. Much of the original New Left baggage was carried into the women's movement: the early women's movement in particular was imbued with typical New Left anti-"elitism,"

anti-theoretical biases and contempt for the lessons of history. Frustration with the male chauvinism of the New Left was a catalyst for the emergence of the women's movement. The New Left dead-end succeeded in discouraging its share of radical youth from a lifetime commitment to revolutionary politics, and some women used the women's movement as a way of seeking personal "liberation" and thus a way out of politics altogether. For others the women's movement was simply an extension of New Left poly-vanguardist constituency politics, a logical extension of the proposition that "whites should organize whites, blacks should organize blacks." For some this idea meant that the only legitimate political work for women was the women's liberation movement. This led to disguised red-baiting of women in so-called "male-dominated" (i.e., sexually non-exclusionist) political organizations, and the charge that socialist women were fighting "other people's" struggles.

A heterogeneous feminist tendency insisted that women were the "revolutionary class" in modern society destined to carry out the revolution against the male-dominated society. Some even envisioned a civil war between men and women for political control. What kind of economic system they would gain control of was never discussed, although many made the blatantly male chauvinist assumption that it would be more "humane" because it would be run by women (the gentle sex?). The various tendencies of feminism hold in common the view that the fundamental division in this society is sex and thus *all* women regardless of class can be united in fighting for their liberation from "male-dominated" society.

Clearly the politics of the SWP cannot provide any alternative strategy for the women's movement. In every field of its activity the SWP/YSA pushes class collaboration and petty-bourgeois poly-vanguardism. It is in this sense that the SWP is correct when it claims to be the main builder of the women's movement: the SWP has indeed been instrumental in building into the women's movement all the reformist illusions and bourgeois traps which have led the current women's liberation movement to an impasse.

For a Socialist Women's Movement!

Petty-bourgeois feminism has shown itself unable to construct a viable women's movement. But the Menshevik policies of the SWP/WONAAC and the utopian petty-bourgeois radicalism of the feminists have not been able to entirely dissipate the powerful impulse to struggle for the emancipation of women, for this impulse is rooted in resistance to the brutal economic and social oppression of capitalism. The bourgeoisie and its agents have been able to successfully channel the women's struggle for a time into electoral manipulation, token hiring of women in certain industries, and sensational or sympathetic coverage in the media. But the resistance of the oppressed to their exploitation and degradation under capitalism can never be eliminated until oppression itself is eliminated following the destruction of capitalism. Militant struggle for women's emancipation will manifest itself again, and must base itself upon the tradition of the socialist women's movement—a long and proud tradition which the reformists and feminists must obscure and deny, a tradition which offers the only road forward for the women's liberation movement. ■

BOLSHEVIK STRUGGLE AGAINST WOMEN'S OPPRESSION

Communist Women's Movement!

second-class union members. In some cases working women formed their own class organizations in response to their exclusion from the established trade union movement and their relegation to largely unorganized sections of industry. In the U.S. separate women's trade unions such as the Tailoresses' Union and the Shoe Binders' Union were formed as early as 1830. Militant strikes were led by the Ladies Waist Makers Union in 1909. However, such separate organizations were inevitably superceded by unions of men and women, as working-class men gradually recognized that the economic interests of both sexes were inseparable. The unions took up only the purely economic aspect of women's lives. Other issues became the property of the growing bourgeois feminist movements.

The Social Democratic (later Communist) women's movement was separate and distinct from both the purely economic trade union movement and the bourgeois feminists. This is clear in an account by Lenin (*Collected Works*, Vol. 13) of the International Socialist Congress held at Stuttgart, September 1907:

"The resolution on women's suffrage was also adopted unanimously. Only one Englishwoman

from the semi-bourgeois Fabian Society defended the admissibility of a struggle not for full women's suffrage but for one limited to those possessing property. The Congress rejected this unconditionally and declared in favor of women workers campaigning for the franchise, not in conjunction with the bourgeois supporters of women's rights, but in conjunction with the class parties of the proletariat. The Congress recognized that in the campaign for women's suffrage it was necessary to uphold fully the principles of socialism and equal rights for men and women without distorting those principles for the sake of expediency."

The necessity for a clear, unqualified class line separating the socialist women's movement from the bourgeois feminists was understood from the first informal gathering of women socialists held in London in 1896. The Gotha Congress of the German Social Democratic Party held earlier that same year had, at Clara Zetkin's insistence, laid the groundwork for agitational work among proletarian women for the purpose of drawing them into the general working-class movement.

Debate in the German party centered around the question of the need for special organizational forms devoted to work in this section of the proletariat. At issue was whether this work should take place within or outside the party organization. The final decision was to establish a *women's section within the party*. It was based on two considerations: (1) the struggle of women workers for emancipation is linked inseparably to the struggle of the entire working class against capitalism; (2) as long as women workers are prevented from full involvement in the working-class movement, a special organizational mechanism devoted to work among women is necessary. The factors impeding women's full participation in the proletarian movement were seen to flow from women's role in the family which resulted in their relegation to the least organized, most oppressed sections of the class; lack of education and intellectual development; and victimization by backward social attitudes and laws.

The women's section had a great deal of organizational autonomy (partially, but not entirely, because women were legally barred from entrance into political organizations in Germany until 1908). At the same time the section was

politically responsible to the leading bodies of the party. This organizational form upheld the principle of revolutionary working-class unity under a single party banner while allowing for the application of a variety of methods of propaganda and agitation among women. Although other forms of organization were used elsewhere, the German form was the most widespread and successful and seemed to allow for the greatest clarity of theory and unity in action of the common movement.

Bolshevik Work Among Women

The Russian Social Democratic Labor Party (Bolshevik) carried out extensive propaganda among women workers prior to the October Revolution. The pages of its journal, *Rabotnitsa* (Woman Worker), which first appeared under the direction of the Bolshevik Central Committee on International Women's Day 1914, contained polemics directed against the bourgeois feminist movements of Russia and Europe and against the Mensheviks' policy of male exclusionism in the women's movement. Articles on the family and the causes of women's oppression, the means of their emancipation, current domestic and international affairs and the participation of women in the workers' movement appeared in the seven issues of *Rabotnitsa* which were published between February 1914 and the outbreak of World War I in July.

In the spring of 1914 women from the major industrial centers of Russia elected delegates, largely Bolshevik supporters, for the Third International Socialist Women's Conference scheduled to take place in Vienna later that year. Due to the intervention of the war the conference did not take place, but at the instigation of the Bolshevik Central Committee a congress of left-wing socialist women was held in Berne, Switzerland on 26-28 March 1915. Of the thirty delegates attending, four of the six Russian delegates were Bolsheviks who brought with them a draft resolution written by Lenin. The resolution demanded: Break with the Social Democratic betrayers—Turn the imperialist war into a civil war! It called for agitation among the masses for socialist revolution. The resolution was defeated by the centrists and pacifists, as a similar resolution was later defeated at the Zimmer-

continued on page 11



Continued from page 7

...VANGUARD NEWSLETTER

interesting discussion topics.

While a leader in the CT, Fender favored conscription and called for trade union control of Nixon's army. The "proletarian military policy" either reflects utopian illusions or social chauvinist impulses. In the case of the CT, it also reflected a machismo world-view—a worship of the army because it is tough and manly. The CT ranks felt so strongly about this position that they refused to unite with Turner's draft-dodger protegee, Sherwood. But for politicians of the calibre of Fender and Turner fundamental differences in policy toward the army—the essence of the bourgeois state—are no bar to unity.

Mythical Rank and File Caucuses

Despite its flexible membership standards, VNL wasn't doing so well. Therefore, early this year, Turner came up with an even looser group in the guise of a pan-union oppositional formation, the Committee for Rank and File Caucuses, based on only two programmatic demands: opposition to state wage control and support for a labor party. The purpose of the CRFC is to enable some impotent literary grouplets—VNL, Socialist Forum, the "New York Revolutionary Committee"—to pretend to have a labor movement orientation.

The CRFC is a completely phony gimmick. VNL has no union caucuses, has no influence in any union caucuses, and conducts no mass work except for an occasional leaflet. Turner might just as well have called a "national network of soviets" since VNL is currently just as active in organizing soviets as it is in organizing union caucuses.

For Leninists, a union caucus is a means for winning the most advanced workers to the vanguard party through the process of struggle. The party intervenes through party fractions, the arm of the party in mass organizations of the class. A union caucus is necessarily an alternative embryonic union leadership and must have a transitional program comprehensive enough to provide consistent communist leadership of that union. The CRFC is that classic centrist concept—the *programmatic united front* substituting for a party. A united front is a tactical alliance

to fight for specific aims. It is not a permanent organization capable of leading the class. The CRFC is simply a means by which opportunists can "unite" without taking any responsibility for one another, leaving each component free to pursue its own particular hobbyhorse ("Trotskyism," DeLeonism, Maoist adventurism) while hanging together for mutual back-scratching (as over the St. Louis incident) and a semblance of wider influence.

Turner's opportunism is particularly visible in the CRFC's two-point program. In the 1968 faction fight, Turner essentially reduced the communist trade union program to the upgrading of poorly paid black workers. But if the fight against the oppression of black workers was everything for Turner then, it is nothing for him now. The CRFC program does not even mention the race question!

The March issue of VNL began yet another series of articles on the Spartacist League, again attacking the SL as a "not very serious student-oriented personality cult around James Robertson" in an article typically entitled "The Spartacist League: A 'Workers Vanguard' for Students." What unleashed this latest spate of VNL vicious attacks on the SL for its supposed "student orientation" was the SL's intervention into the CRFC's "founding conference" on January 25. What Turner, assiduously cultivating the image of an "honest worker," does not bother to mention was that while he himself is a senior professional in a white-collar job complete with private secretary, the SL supporters who attended the CRFC meeting as observers consisted of our trade union director, a long-time delegate for a city employees' union and the editor of an oppositional caucus newspaper in a transport union. And behind that delegation lay a history of struggle to construct real union caucuses based on a transitional program, a proven capacity to carry *communist* politics into the union movement, and a rapidly growing involvement in oppositional struggles in the working class.

The SL never mechanically equates an individual's political line directly with his personal social status. But Turner's deliberately constructed proletarian image is a fraud. More than most left-wing organizations, VNL is defined by

its social composition. VNL consists of older, materially well-off radicals who have come through harder, more dynamic organizations. They are burnt out, reacting against the pressures of an aggressive organization and resentful of the demands which such an organization makes upon its experienced and leading members.

If Turner had been remotely principled, he would have become a hospital worker carrying out the policy he claims was the basis for his opposition in and split from the SL. Turner claimed he had an iron-clad formula for winning black workers, which was not vitiated by small size (e.g., the MLCRC after the loss of its only two hospital workers). In the years since he left the SL, the Turner grouping has done *no* trade union work and virutally no mass work of any kind. Turner has become a parasitic intriguer in the ostensibly Trotskyist movement seeking blocs with anyone he can find. Despite his posturing in his resignation from the SL that he did not "intend to build or join an anti-Spartacist League," the subjective impulse in the formation of VNL was nothing more than Harry Turner's wounded ego pouring out hostility and slander against the SL.

The Politics of Dilettantism

When Turner left the SL, the instability that he had shown while an SL member became an all-consuming desire to show us up no matter how. But in the years since then, the underlying political impulse which led to his break has been spelled out. At bottom, the VNL is a second-string IS, and it is indeed the IS that VNL resembles in its practice, but superficially without the burden of the discreditable history of the IS. VNL and IS often compete for the same recruits and have shown a capacity to transfer membership smoothly. Where Fender joined VNL, his former comrades in the CT joined IS. When Turner's long-time supporters, Fredricks, Davis and Robins, left VNL they joined IS. Since the formal politics of VNL and IS are not particularly similar, it is clear that their similar attraction for such people stems from another factor. VNL and IS are the most finished expressions of dilettantism among ostensibly revolutionary groups.

As James Cannon observed, participation in the revolutionary movement often burns out people and destroys their combativeness. The cadres of a serious communist organization function under considerable inner tension. They must take responsibility for the political lives and well-being of their comrades, are held strictly accountable for their actions and opinions, must suppress subjective impulses for the sake of the collective and often have their pride hurt in internal political struggle. These pressures on a communist militant are particularly difficult to withstand in the U.S., where a pervasive anti-communist social climate degrades and ridicules the concept of a professional revolutionary.

Thus the revolutionary movement inevitably throws off burnt-out shells. These rejects often retain a certain interest in and sympathy for revolutionary ideas. They find or create organizations like IS or VNL that allow them to dabble in revolutionary politics, but do not demand a disciplined participation or a necessarily high level of activity. The VNL group is essentially a rest home for burnt-out would-be communists. Most of its supporters belong there and we have no interest in them. However, we must set the record straight in the interests of communist sanitation, and we have an obligation to try to deflect younger comrades from entering, out of naivete or lack of knowledge, this final resting place for the rejects of our movement.

We have not very often been the object of repeated public polemical attack, the involuted 1984 logic of Tim Wohlforth aside. And considering that Turner appears bent on devoting the rest of his natural life to us, it becomes objectively necessary, despite the source, to wipe the smears off our political reputation. As Marxists, we are not committed solely to day-to-day tasks, but rather to the continuing historical responsibility to shape the future of the revolutionary movement as well. We assert and are prepared to prove against any challenge that the Spartacist League is the organizational embodiment of revolutionary Marxism and stands qualitatively above and counterposed to all the imposters. To leave a Turner unscathed might permit the impression to prevail that we are but the best of that dreary lot of contemporary radical fauna in America—e.g., CP, PL, SWP, IS, NCLC—that each in its own way are break-down products of the theoretical incisiveness and whole-hearted commitment in class struggle that are the true heritage of Lenin's Third and Trotsky's Fourth Internationals. ■

Continued from page 5

West Coast NPAC

SWP could reach a compromise with the pro-McGovern leaders caucusing in the next room. This provided an unusually long discussion period, during which the SWP was forced into a defensive posture on its left flank, against numerous SL/RCY speakers. Finally, a McGovern spokesman announced that after caucusing, the McGovern forces were withdrawing their request for official NPAC endorsement, since that would run against NPAC's official "independence." He neglected to mention that it would also run the risk of breaking up a convenient recruiting ground for liberal Democrats!

The "Power" of the Anti-war Movement

During the discussion, an SL spokesman pointed out that the NLF offensive created an "anti-war" bourgeoisie, which finds the slogan "out now" totally acceptable to its current imperialist needs, resulting in a swelling of McGovern and NPAC forces. NPAC spokesman Stephanie Coontz argued that the "power" of the anti-war movement forced the bourgeoisie to consider withdrawal. As the official NPAC resolution said, "The movement drove Lyndon Johnson out of politics; forced Richard Nixon to get the troops out of Cambodia and withdraw half a million GI's from Vietnam; and turned public sentiment decisively against the war." Yet this "powerful" anti-war movement has been going for seven years and Nixon continues bombing with impunity! It was in fact the power of the DRV/NLF armies

which accomplished the above feats, in the 1968 Tet offensive and the 1970 Cambodia battle particularly.

An NPAC spokesman boasted, "we built McGovern; McGovern didn't build the anti-war movement," to which an SL member responded, "Yes, that's true, NPAC did build McGovern!" SWP big-wig Harry Ring soon got up to restore the facade of SWP radicalism by stating he would vote for Jenness/Pulley in November; but at the same time, he asserted that we all have a duty to "rally the American people" against "this monstrous war." Ring concluded by saying everyone should "go their own way" on election day as long as unity is achieved. The Jenness/Pulley campaign, based on a liberal program hardly distinguishable from that of Shirley Chisholm, except for the "socialist" label, serves qualitatively the same function as the Communist Party's campaign: a left cover for the party's connection with the Democrats. The only difference is that the CP is more brazen about its intentions inside the Democrat Party. While Ring votes SWP, the bourgeoisie will go its own way with the youth collected by the SWP's pop front!

In the summing-up remarks, SL spokesman Al Nelson ripped into the SWP, recalling that "a line was drawn in blood last year," and charging, "this place reeks of bourgeois pacifism." Nelson noted the obvious deal that had been made between the SWP and the pro-McGovern forces and demanded of the SWP, "quit calling yourselves Trotskyists" and join McGovern openly. He emphasized the most important aspect of the SL/RCY motion—expulsion of the bourgeoisie.

As expected, the official NPAC resolution was passed overwhelmingly, but the SL/RCY proposal received a solid bloc of about 40 votes, emerging clearly as the only communist opposition present. The other "opposition" resolutions received a tiny handful of votes each. Once again, as the SWP delivers its pop-front supporters to McGovern, NPAC has served as a litmus test for principled politics, and only the SL/RCY passed. ■

Continued from page 11

France...

petty-bourgeois milieu and refer to themselves as the "extreme left."

Renault

Especially in view of the fact that gauchiste milieus have tended to glorify these recent strikes and hold them up as examples for working-class action, it is important to appraise them carefully. The most important strike is doubtless that at Renault in May 1971. Any strike at Renault takes on immediate significance, not only because of the economic importance of Renault in France (Renault is the eighth largest auto manufacturer in the world and employs over 90,000 workers), but also because the Renault factory at Billancourt (which employs 38,000 workers) is on the edge of Paris, within the Paris subway system, and because ever since the 1920's Renault has been the bastion of Communist Party influence in the working class. Renault-Billancourt has played a leading role in every major class upsurge in France. Thus it is extremely important that the 1971 strike began as a wildcat—which became total, including workers' occupation of the factory—only a few months after a new contract (claimed as a "victory" by the CGT)—was signed.

Since that time, there has been continued small-scale activity at Renault, and the action of the Renault workers has put an intense squeeze on profits. Renault is a "nationalized" industry which receives a government subsidy of some \$30 million a year (150 million francs). In 1971, Renault had only the second deficit of its history—\$36 million (197 million francs). (The first, in 1961, was \$2 million.) This is not entirely due to the strike, since although profits in 1969 were about \$28 million, in 1970 they were only \$1 million.

This sheds light on the significance of other strikes. The overwhelming majority of these strikes have been in marginal industries or factories, or in state-owned factories which are attempting to be competitive on the capitalist market. These marginal enterprises are relatively highly vulnerable, while strikes in the nationalized industries constitute a direct attack on the state. To the extent that French capitalism is caught in a squeeze between the U.S., Germany and Japan, these strikes are also a prefiguration of what may be in store in other, apparently more "healthy," industries (Renault, etc.). The fact that political elements in these strikes are never far from the surface and that significant demands revolve around issues of working conditions and layoffs adds to the worried premonitions of the bourgeoisie.

The Union Apparatuses

The political underpinnings of these strikes are emphasized by the structure and organization of unions in France, which is vastly different from that of the U.S. There are three main unions: the CP-controlled CGT, the Church-initiated (and still Church-dominated) Confédération Française Démocratique du Travail, and the Force Ouvrière. In addition, there are many smaller and independent unions as well as a number of company unions. Since the union shop does not exist in France, all unions can compete for representation in the same factory. In addition, since the largest union, the CGT, is controlled by the CP, competition among unions is also immediately political in nature, and tends to revolve around an anti-communist axis. Thus, for example, members of one union frequently will not follow or respect a strike call of another union within the same industry. This spring, in the Post Office, the CFDT and FO refused to honor a 24-hour strike called by the CGT, and the CGT in turn worked during 24-hour strike actions called by the CFDT and then by FO. None of the unions maintain strike funds, and the CGT has fought attempts to start them up. Strikes are traditionally called for only 24 or 48 hours (although this has changed somewhat since 1968). The splintering of unions can also be seen in its most absurd form in, for example, the Paris subway system, where each subway line within

the system has a different local. It can and does happen therefore that one subway line will call a 24-hour strike which is respected by none of the other lines. Given this sort of exercise in futility, it is small wonder that the urge toward militant united action is rising. French strikes have traditionally been less militant than those in the U.S., but recent strikes have increasingly been marked by violence and police intervention. In most of the strikes listed above, the police, National Guard ("Gardes Mobiles") or the special riot/tactical police, the CRS, have intervened.

Faced with the threat of a class upsurge, the unions and the party bureaucrats have evolved a number of ways of trying to deal with the situation.



Informations Ouvrières, 8-15 March 1972

Militants of the AJS participate in the mass demonstration against Pierre Overney's murderers.

The CFDT, the Pabloist Ligue Communiste and the gauchiste groups have tended to play up many strike situations—Pennaroya, Girosteel, Joint Français, Nouvelles Galeries—by organizing strike support committees which, given the lack of union strike funds, have in some cases provided significant material support through national fund-raising campaigns.

The Ligue in particular has viewed these strikes as "exemplary," that is, as strikes which are held up as a model to the working class. The formation of support committees, the involvement of (external) political elements, the attempt to rally the support of the population (since many of these strikes have taken place in relatively isolated areas), are offered by the Ligue, not as a sign of its weakness, but as evidence for its theory of implanting itself in the working class by moving from the "periphery"—some Ligue presence in marginal industries, virtually no implantation in key industries—to the "center" of the class.

In typical Pabloist fashion, the Ligue has virtually abandoned any attempts at direct implantation in the class on the grounds that the class and its principal union, the CGT, are too closely bound to the Stalinists. The Ligue makes the actual weakness of its implantation in the class into a theoretical virtue. It thus again demonstrates its Pabloist nature by searching for a revolutionary agent everywhere but within the class itself, in this case through work from the outside or in marginal industries.

The CFDT, which after 1968 attempted to capitalize on the militancy of the younger workers especially, has adopted a "left" vocabulary and has also supported, though ultimatically, these strikes. On the one hand the CFDT has urged long strikes (with no funds to support them, thus breeding discouragement and disillusionment) and on the other hand has supported these strikes only in isolated cases, refusing any appeal to mass working-class solidarity, which might threaten the position of the CFDT bureaucrats. Not surprisingly, the working class is be-

ginning to react against this combination of adventurism and sellout by rejecting the CFDT. At Creusot-Loire, in a strike led by the CFDT and widely hailed in gauchiste milieus as a success, recent union elections resulted in a loss by the CFDT of nearly 40% of its votes from previous elections. At Paris-Nantes, the CFDT lost 30% of its votes. A two-month strike at Girosteel and a nine-week strike at Nouvelles Galeries, a department store, resulted in mass desertion from the CFDT and in each case the formation of a company union.

In recognition of this trend, the CFDT has most recently moved to expel left elements, in particular Trotskyists, from its ranks in order to move closer to the CGT. Two members of

Lutte Ouvrière were expelled by the CFDT in the south of France, and the leadership has begun a campaign against the fractions of the Ligue Communiste in various areas.

The combination of the deterioration of the economic position of the French working class and the frequently adventuristic policies of the Pabloists and the gauchistes starkly highlights the question of revolutionary leadership and of the construction of a vanguard party. In France, the central task in building a Bolshevik party is to shatter the hegemony of the Stalinist Communist Party.

CP/CGT

Within the limits of its strategic aim of turning the class away from class struggle and toward collaboration with capital, the French CP is sometimes obliged to respond to the massive pressure of its base. In such cases, it combines limited actions with a slander campaign against the left.

The CP systematically amalgamates everyone to its left—spontaneists, anarchists, Maoists, Trotskyists, etc.—into part of a "gauchiste plot" on the part of the government to mislead the working class. Due to the adventurism of the Pabloists and gauchistes, this tactic has had a certain success. At times, however, it has backfired. Thus in February, when a member of the "parallel police" (plain-clothes armed company security guards) in the Renault factory shot and killed in cold blood a young Maoist worker, Pierre Overney, who was leafletting the factory, virtually all groups on the left—some seventeen in all—formed a united front to demonstrate at Overney's funeral against parallel police and call for their dissolution. The CP denounced the "violence" of the "gauchistes" but did not protest Overney's murder and refused to support the demonstration, which was nevertheless attended by 200,000 people including many workers and CP militants. When, however, a few days later, a Maoist commando group kidnapped Renault's personnel director in charge of firing, the CP's

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accusation could again take hold on the working class.

More recently, as the pressure exerted on the CP, in particular by the ostensible Trotskyist groups, has increased, the CGT union which controls the distribution of papers to newsstands has refused to distribute *Lutte Ouvrière*. As the election draws closer, and as the influence of the ostensible Trotskyist groups grows (as it has been doing rather steadily), the CP can be expected to increase its offensive against these groups.

Combined with its campaign of slander and denunciation, however, the CP has also been obliged to give the impression that it is "doing something." Thus the CGT called a "24-hour general strike" for June 7—which it itself helped sabotage by urging workers at, for example, Renault, not to go to the demonstration in Paris. It was not, in fact, a general strike at all. Further, the CP restricted the June 7 demonstrations to the most limited slogans possible—1,000 francs minimum monthly income and retirement at sixty—instead of in any way enlarging on these demands, which had been put forth in June 1968. Nevertheless, the June 7 action was a success. After boycotting the June 7 strike, the CFDT, with the background of the failure of its own "radical" strike actions, attempted to link up with the CGT. Together the CGT and CFDT called a bigger and better "general strike"—this time for *two hours!*—on June 23.

French Left

OCI Seeks Class Unity, Weakens Program

The French ostensibly Trotskyist movement is a critical arena in the battle of tendencies vying for the ideological and organizational mantle of Trotskyism on a world scale. The highly unstable objective situation in France thrusts the French movement to the forefront of the world-wide crisis of proletarian leadership. Moreover, there are in France three sizeable nominally Trotskyist organizations, each of which is associated with (and in some sense representative of) one of the international blocs which have been quantitatively pre-eminent in the ostensibly Trotskyist world movement over the past period.

The semi-state capitalist *Lutte Ouvrière* group, loosely associated with the British and U.S. International Socialism groups, adhered before May-June 1968 to a theory of linear recruitment in the class almost irrespective of the ebbs and flows of the class struggle, and oblivious to the need to seek to recruit individuals and groupings from other left organizations (possible particularly in times of dramatic working-class motion). LO was severely disoriented by the 1968 events, which shattered the traditional routinist preoccupations of the various organizations and strongly posed the objective need for united fronts among the tendencies to the left of the CP. Sharply over-reacting in unprincipled fashion, LO responded by proposing lowest-common-denominator unification with the Ligue Communiste to form "not a Bolshevik but a revolutionary party." (This overture, persistently pursued by LO for months, allowed the Ligue to affirm a principled stance by pointing out that a party must be based on programmatic agreement.)

LO/Ligue Electoral Scheme

Since 1968 LO has continued its opportunism/economism. It has publicly offered to cease opposition to the Communist Party (i.e., to give up being Trotskyist) if the CP would present and run on a program in the interests of the working class. LO's factory campaigns tend to center on particular grievances in a way strongly reminiscent of the SDS "rubber mats" campaigns. For the forthcoming elections, LO is entering into an election coalition with the Ligue. The two organizations plan to run some 200-300 candidates under a common banner at the national level, in

Pop Front Pact

The central element of CP policy, however, has been the signing of an electoral agreement between the CP and the SP. The agreement would form the platform for a future Popular Front government should the CP and SP win the parliamentary election which will take place before March 1973. The agreement was signed in the wake of what amounted to a defeat for the government in its April referendum on the Common Market. Although the government won a majority of votes cast, two-thirds of the French electorate either abstained or voted no. On the basis of those results, reflecting the deteriorating economic situation in France and a long series of financial scandals in the government, there exists a real possibility of the election of a CP-SP government in 1973, or at any rate a near-majority.

The pact signed between the CP and SP is much broader than the agreement which gave rise to the election of the Popular Front government in 1936. The pact is, all the same, a thinly disguised *betrayal* of the French workers' aspirations. Thus, the governmental program promises not to change the bourgeois Constitution which DeGaulle had enacted during his reign; although the program calls for nationalizing twenty-five of the largest industries in France, it virtually promises indemnification; it abounds in promises and assurances of its respect for (bourgeois) legality, law and order, etc. And to

top it all off, it even contains an anti-communist (or, in this instance, anti-Trotskyist) clause which promises to prosecute anyone calling for the violent overthrow of the government!

At the same time, however, the agreement sets the stage for a possible upsurge which could seriously threaten the apparatus itself if the coalition should win the election, just as the general strike of 1936 began as a result of the feeling that a "socialist" (i.e., Pop Front) government had been elected. The fact that the CGT has begun experimentally supporting "hard," i.e., unlimited, strikes bears witness both to its need to respond to the movement of the class and the dangers inherent for it in this movement. In the wake of Pompidou's relative defeat in last April's referendum, he has carried out a major reshuffling of his government, including the resignation of the Prime Minister, Chaban-Delmas, and his replacement by Pierre Mesmer. While the government must maneuver in an attempt to maintain its "credibility" through the elections, the CP must on the one hand attempt to respond to the demands of its base sufficiently to retain its chances for a good showing in the elections, but at the same time not allow the development of large-scale militant strikes which might escape its control, spread to the class as a whole and become explicitly political. To a large extent, the results of the upcoming parliamentary elections will depend on the actions of the class and the CGT bureaucracy when the French return from their annual August vacations. ■

meetings, however, the OCI stresses almost exclusively the slogan of working-class unity and the demand for a workers government based on the exclusion of the bourgeoisie. Concretely, the OCI calls for a Communist Party-Socialist Party government.

The OCI clearly and consciously reduces the transitional program to this single demand, which supposedly incorporates the rest. For the OCI, the slogan of a CP-SP government is the "central political question today," which "means that *all* the determining factors of our policies are concentrated in this slogan...we have to support demands, but it is not the enumeration of demands which by itself allows us to advance if we do not have *at the center* of our politics *the demand for the workers' government.*" (Stéphane Just, *The Workers and Peasants Government*, emphasis in original). A National Conference of the OCI in April 1972 passed a resolution calling for cooperation by all levels of the working class in the fight for a workers' government. The resolution insists that the OCI "demands no other political commitment than that of breaking with the bourgeoisie" (*Informations Ouvrières*, 12-17 April). And at a public speech to a meeting of over 3,000 on 5 May, Charles Berg, one of the leaders of the OCI and national secretary of the OCI's de facto youth group, said categorically that "the OCI does not intend to impose its program as an ultimatum."

The Struggle for Program

The OCI relegates to a subordinate position, or even omits entirely, the Bolshevik concept of struggle for political program *within* the united front, which Lenin and Trotsky always saw as inseparable from the struggle for class unity through the united front. As Trotsky insisted in *What Next? Vital Questions for the German Proletariat* (1932):

"That a workers' party is compelled to carry out the policy of the united front—that is not to be gainsaid. But the policy of the united front has its dangers. Only an experienced and tested revolutionary party can carry out this policy successfully. *In any case, the policy of the united front cannot serve as a program for a revolutionary party.* And in the meantime the entire activity of the SAP is now being built on it. As a result, the policy of the united front is carried over into the party itself, that is, it serves to smear over the contradictions between the various tendencies. And that is precisely the fundamental function of centrism." [our emphasis]

Subordination of its full program is precisely the policy of the OCI. Although the OCI has a program, one has to hunt to find it. It is everywhere submerged like, as Trotsky put it, "treasure at the bottom of the ocean" which does no one any good.

During the 1968 events, when what was required was above all a clear-cut drawing of the political lines in order to expose the reformist betrayal of the CP, the OCI originally called for a single

part to gain access to state-paid television time. This is an enormous publicity undertaking, since a guarantee of slightly over \$200 must be posted for each candidate, to which must be added the costs of the campaign.

The Ligue Communiste is simply following its 1968 performance, when it ran Alain Krivine for president and gained the publicity on which much of its growth has been based. The most left-wing extension of the "United Secretariat of the Fourth International," of which it is the largest section, the Ligue is imbued with latter-day Pabloist revisionism, whose central methodological constant is the downgrading of the revolutionary capacity of the industrial proletariat and the impressionistic attempt to find substitute "revolutionary" forces to tail-end.

The Ligue's analysis of the French situation is that since the working class is controlled by the Stalinists, it is therefore impossible to work at the heart of the class. The Ligue claims to work "from the periphery to the center," that is, to begin in marginal and service industries (bank clerks) and somehow organically "grow across" ("transcroître") into the major industrial centers. Like the original revisionist Bernstein who foresaw a peaceful transition to socialism, the Ligue projects an organic transition from a student-oriented and student-based group to a proletarian organization. In fact, there is no painless short-cut to the development of a proletarian base and cadre, and the Ligue's "theory" simply means forswearing efforts at implantation in the working class and eternally undertaking the same type of publicity operations.

OCI Calls for CP/SP Government

By far the most serious ostensibly Trotskyist organization in France is the Organisation Communiste Internationaliste, which was until this year part of an international bloc around the British Socialist Labour League and which is now the leading element in the "Organizing Committee for the Reconstruction of the Fourth International." The OCI is a serious political current with a persistently centrist thrust—i.e., an opportunist practice. In its international interventions, the OCI insists it is based directly on the application of the Transitional Program. In its press and public

Continued from page 16

Fake Lefts Conciliate...

who declared that the Labor for Peace proposal was the only one in order. Mazey went on to explain that Labor for Peace is a "voluntary organization of trade unionists"—such innocence!—and that "we're trying to broaden our base, not narrow it." So much for the *Bulletin's* screaming headline, "Labor Party Fight Rips St. Louis Conference":

The Workers League labor party proposals never *counterpose* themselves to the reformist, sellout *policies* of the labor bureaucracy; instead they lend credence to the bureaucrats' leadership of the unions by providing them with a left cover. The Workers League maintains "left pressure" on bureaucrats, who have been committed to capitalism and capitalist parties for decades, by "demanding" that they form a labor party. Although other "demands" are occasionally mentioned, and the *Bulletin* refers vaguely to an unspecified "socialist program" for the labor party, these are worthless abstractions since neither in print nor in practice does the Workers League ever do anything *concrete* to criticize or separate itself from the bureaucrats whom it hopes will lead the labor party. This extends to the most hopelessly compromised reactionaries, such as I.W. Abel of the Steelworkers and George Meany himself, if they make the smallest muttering about forming a labor party (see "Labor and the Elections," this issue).

The "Call For Rank and File Conference" proposal, which was pushed by the International Socialists and resulted in the formation of a "Rank and File Caucus" at the conference, showed the same method of bureaucratic tailism as the Workers League. The proposal stated, "We believe that this conference has the potential to begin to rejuvenate the labor movement and make it a fighting movement for social progress," thus lending full confidence to a hypocritical bureaucratic maneuver. Although the July issue of the *IS Workers' Power* had demanded that the "pro-Democratic Party electoral orientation of the leadership" of Labor for Peace "must be defeated, in favor of building an independent party of the labor movement," the IS subordinated itself to the "Rank and File Caucus" and totally neglected to fight for this demand at the conference. The "Rank and File" program concentrated on the unresponsiveness of the union leaderships in not mobilizing the rank and file against the war, the inaccessibility of the conference to rank and filers, etc., although it included denunciation of the Democrats and Republicans (with no alternative) and called for a one-day work stoppage.

IS Amends Social Patriotism

Steve Zeluck, a delegate from New Rochelle Federation of Teachers, presented the proposal for a work stoppage in the form of an amendment to the official Labor for Peace policy statement, a patriotic, pro-imperialist statement which read in part: "It is self-evident that this nightmare of killing has gone on far too long, and that this war is illegal and not in our national interest" and "It is self-evident that this war has severely tarnished the good name and moral leadership of our country in the arena of world opinion." Nowhere does the *Workers' Power* report of the conference (August) criticize this statement, except to say that the conference organizers "intend to do nothing" to carry it out! The "Rank and File Caucus" and its IS backers thus endorsed the labor bureaucrats' entire program and analysis, only proposing an action contingent upon that analysis!

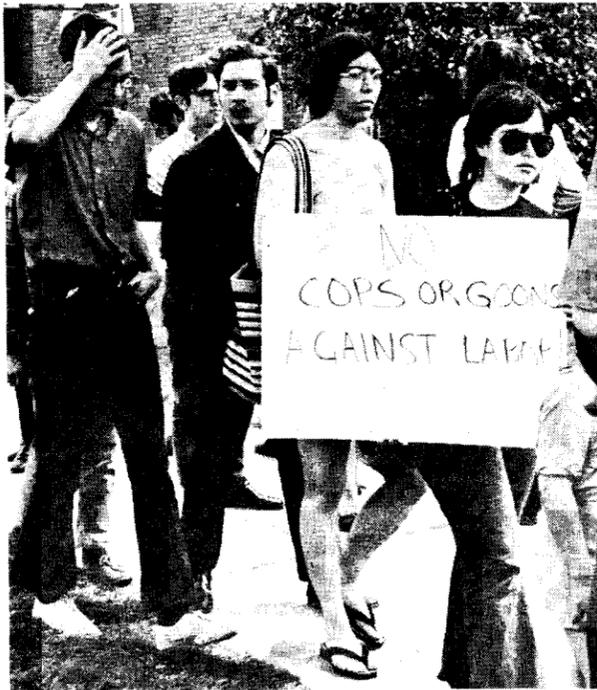
Although only about 20% of the delegates voted, there was enough support in a straw poll for this amendment to alarm the callers of the conference, such as Harry Bridges of the ILWU, who demagogically attacked the amendment later (there was not enough support, however, to justify the IS' pompous *Workers' Power* headline, "Rank and File Caucus Shakes Labor for Peace Conference..."). In fact, the labor bureaucrats might someday lead one-day political strikes, as their class-traitor brothers in the large workers parties of Europe sometimes do, but only

when such an action is simply a harmless protest—an "escape valve"—to head off even greater militancy. This is the only meaning such an amendment to the wretchedly social patriotic program of these pro-capitalist bureaucrats could have.

Stalinists Exclude Left Wing

Like the Workers League, the NCLC blows up its self-importance by claiming that its strike-support proposal dominated the TUAD Conference and was the basis for the exclusion of the Labor Committee and its supporters. What the CP was really afraid of was *any* criticism from the left of its effort to build support for McGovern and the Democratic Party in the elections. Supporters of the Spartacist League, Revolutionary Communist Youth, Workers League, and caucus representatives from NMU, AFSCME, UFT, AFT, UAW and taxi and hospital unions were violently excluded along with the Labor Committee. CP goons fingered known left-wingers as "disrupters" despite the fact that no disruption of the conference had even been threatened. The dissidents were herded into a small room, supposedly for investigation by the "credentials committee," and then expelled. Others were barred at the door with questions like, "Are you a member of the Spartacist League?" Inside the hall, a floor fight erupted over the question of the exclusions. Two supporters of the Workers League got the floor during the debate on rules, but spoke against the exclusion of *their own supporters only*, ignoring the principled question of the exclusions. After several futile attempts to gain the floor, the large NCLC delegation moved to the front of the hall and were physically ejected by CP goons. Supporters of the Spartacist League and Revolutionary Communist Youth, some of whom had been inadvertently allowed in by the goons, walked out in protest of the mass exclusions after efforts to raise the issue from the floor proved futile.

While NCLC leader L. Marcus discusses exclusion with Chicago cops, SL/RCY members on joint picket line protest both exclusion and the use of cops within the labor movement.



Unlike the opportunist Workers League, which wormed its way into bureaucratic favor in order to remain in and present its proposal undisturbed by principled questions, the Militant-Solidarity Caucus of the National Maritime Union was prevented from entering its resolution, "For a Labor Party Based On a Militant Program," because of its principled defense of the victims of Stalinist gangsterism. This resolution, which included a full program, stated that, "it is the reformist trade union bureaucracy, both 'progressive' and reactionary, which ties labor to the politicians of the capitalist parties," and called "for a labor party...to mobilize the entire struggle against the influence of the capitalist parties in the unions and the reign of their bureaucratic agents."

After the expulsions, a picket line was set up

outside the hall by supporters of the NCLC, Spartacist League, and others. Members of the Workers League refused to join the picket, thereby supporting the exclusion. At a later point in the conference, the Workers League crossed the picket line en masse after having made a deal with some of their bureaucrat friends to allow them readmission to the conference. Although they feebly protested their *own* exclusion from TUAD, at the Labor for Peace Conference the previous weekend the WL had excluded all other tendencies from their publicly advertised forum, "The UAW Convention and the Fight to Build a Labor Party."

The Stalinophobic Nonsense of the NCLC

The Labor Committee's response to the TUAD events intensified the pattern of Stalinophobic



reflex they have established against hooligan attacks and slanders suffered at the hands of the CP over the past several months. This reached a hilarious crescendo in the 17-21 July issue of *New Solidarity*, which stated.

"As of the Chicago TUAD events, the socialist movement has entered a new, decisive phase. [:] In the weeks ahead the left as a whole will realize something we and the Communist Party (CP) already know: that there are only two serious alternative tendencies, crystallized in two organizations: the popular front or the class-for-itself—the CP or the National Caucus of Labor Committees. [:]"

It is quite proper that the NCLC should see the CP as its chief competitor, since their "class-for-itself" politics have essentially the same popular front character as the more orthodox CP variety. The "Build Strike Support Coalitions" proposal which it tried to present to the TUAD conference is a hodge-podge of crackpot theories and a denial of the fundamental tenets of Marxism. The "coalitions" are to unite "as equals" workers, lumpen and petty-bourgeois elements which can never be "equal" until the abolition of classes under socialism. The program for these "coalitions," which are supposed to transcend "narrow trade union forms," is nevertheless nothing more than simple trade union economism. Furthermore, the NCLC places *conditions* on bourgeois politicians rather than demanding a break in *principle*: "TUAD will refuse all support to candidates for public office *who advocate wage-controls in any form*" (emphasis ours). Thus all the political elements of the classical pop front are present in the "class-for-itself": a coalition comprising many class elements, a reformist program subordinating working-class interests to demands acceptable to the petty-bourgeois and bureaucratic "allies," and an unprincipled conditional approach to the capitalist politicians, leaving open the

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possibility of a bloc if conditions are agreed upon.

The NCLC's attempt to put together a "united front" for defense against the CP has revealed the same pop frontist approach including indiscriminate appeals to all anti-CP forces, without regard for their class nature. They approached both the class-collaborationist Women's National Abortion Action Coalition (WONAAC) and the equally pop frontist, single-issue Student Mobilization Committee (SMC) in this endeavor. Furthermore, during the TUAD conference NCLC leader Lynn Marcus made a personal report to a Chicago cop who approached the picket line, informing him of the NCLC's exclusion from the conference and identifying the Communist Party as the executors of this action, thus providing the police with an excuse to raid or harass the meeting! This frenzied attempt to create an all-class anti-communist bloc against the CP can only play directly into the hands of those in the Stalinist parties who regularly invoke the charge of "police agents," etc., against their left-wing critics.

At the same time, the Labor Committee seeks to regroup with a large segment of the CP, with which it demonstrates such methodological kinship. The "Call for United Defense" printed in the same *New Solidarity* contains the absurd characterization that the 20th Congress of the Soviet Communist Party in 1956 abandoned Stalinist hooliganism and "Moscow Trial"-type slanders! The NCLC knows very well that the 20th

Congress, which was followed shortly by the crushing of the political revolution in Hungary, in no way abandoned any fundamental aspect of Stalinism. This gross political softness is an opportunist ploy toward what the NCLC sees as "reformed" elements within the mainstream of Stalinism.

For Principled Defense of the Left!

On the basis of this "Call," *New Solidarity* claimed that Spartacist had "agreed to attend a planning meeting." No such agreement had been made, since it would have implied political support not only to the nonsense in the "Call," but also to the class-collaborationist bloc and the provocative campaign the NCLC was waging against the CP in general. In rebuking the NCLC for this false claim (which was withdrawn in a later issue of *New Solidarity*), the SL pointed out its continuing commitment to the principle that all groups within the labor movement have a right to exist and freely propagate their ideas in public (see "Open Letter to the NCLC," available free on request). It is the duty of all militants and socialists to defend any group on the left—including the Stalinist hypocrites themselves—against any specific assault on this right. As we demonstrated at the TUAD conference, we unconditionally support united front defense against such assaults.

The politics of the fake-lefts at the Labor for Peace and TUAD Conferences—WL, IS, NCLC—all clearly demonstrated their inability to pose

a working-class alternative to the reformism of the Communist Party and the labor bureaucracy. Each by its own particular method of opportunism served as an apologist and left cover for these same reformist politics. The construction of a revolutionary leadership in the labor movement, able to lead the struggle forward towards the socialist revolution, will never be won by such methods. Failure to ruthlessly expose the sellout policies of the labor bureaucracy and reliance on a single popular issue or organizational gimmick may gain temporary allies, but in the long run will only lead to defeat and postponement of the class consciousness needed to drive the working class forward in the struggle for power.

The Only Correct Course

The Spartacist League seeks to build a revolutionary leadership by the only means available: the organizing of caucuses and the creation of a communist cadre in the unions on the basis of a revolutionary program of transitional demands. This program calls for breaking state wage controls; a sliding scale of wages and hours; opposition to the special oppression of Blacks, other minorities and women; opposition to protectionist nationalism with its threat of third world war; strike action against the Vietnam war; defense of the Vietnamese Revolution and the deformed workers' states against imperialist attack; breaking the working class from the strangle-hold of the two capitalist parties; and building a workers' party based on the labor movement and committed to a transitional program. ■

Continued from page 13

OCI...

workers' candidate in the elections *without a program*. Justifying this policy, the OCI wrote:

"But what about program? Didn't a single candidate put up by the workers' organizations need a program? What was it developing into? In these specific circumstances, the development of a program for the government of the united workers' organizations derived from this joint campaign. By fighting for the defeat of the candidates of the bourgeoisie, the working class would have given a class content to the united campaign of the workers' organizations."

—Stéphane Just, *Defense of Trotskyism*

When a unified campaign did not develop, however, the OCI called for a boycott of the elections, on the grounds that participation in them simply meant approving the final destruction of the general strike.

The OCI and the CP

The OCI apparently interprets its application of the tactic of the united front to mean downplaying explicit criticism of the working-class organizations, in particular the CP. Thus in the first issue of *IO* after the CP-SP pact—an issue in which one would have expected a rather extensive critique of the pact—we read:

"No working-class organization which cares about defending the interests of workers and youth can content itself with criticizing the bankruptcy of other working-class parties and opposing its demands to theirs. At a time when the entire economic and political situation impels workers to rise up against capital and the bourgeois State... revolutionary militants who fight in and for their class cannot counterpose their own ideas (which they continue to defend) to the search for a means of working-class unity capable of getting rid of the Pompidou-Chabal government.

"Of course it would be very easy for us to undertake the 'critique' of the 'common program' for a government'... But that is not our intention at present. We have no intention of placing ourselves within the framework of the Marchais-Mitterand program in order to make a 'left-wing' critique of it. We leave that sort of game to Krivine [Ligue Communiste]."

—*Informations Ouvrières*, 5-12 July 1972

Similarly, an OCI militant who intervened at the CGT congress in April raised several questions: the sellout of the Paris subway strike of October 1971, the CGT's attitude to the Overney murder, the political trials in Czechoslovakia. But he did so without either explicitly identifying the

CP or proposing any explicit programmatic alternative to the CP policy. This is in marked contrast to, for example, a speech Trotsky wrote for an intervention in the CGT in 1935. Like the OCI delegate, Trotsky began by asking leading questions about the real meaning of some ambiguous phrases which are the Stalinists' stock in trade. But unlike the OCI militant, Trotsky then went on to pose at some length a programmatic alternative to the program and actions of the CP. The OCI limits itself to asking leading questions without posing an alternative. When the downplaying of OCI criticism of the CP was questioned by a number of people present at an OCI educational in Paris, *IO's* account of several OCI educationals quoted two of these questions but did not even attempt to answer them or justify its policy, merely stating: "Those are the real questions. That is the beginnings of an outline of a discussion entirely oriented toward a precise objective: how to construct the revolutionary party..." (*IO*, 21-28 June 1972).

It is not enough for the OCI to quote Trotsky's calls for a Blum-Cachin government in 1935, or to protest that it criticizes the CP privately or implicitly. That is no doubt true, but as Trotsky wrote in *Whither France?*: "As soon as principled political differences are not manifested openly and actively... they cease thereby to exist politically." The OCI bases itself on a one-sided allegiance to Trotsky's writings on the united front, including only his calls for class unity but neglecting his insistence on sharp polemics against centrists. This is evident in the most recent issue of *La Vérité* (No. 557) where the OCI quotes only from Trotsky's attacks against third period Stalinism in *What Next?* and ignores his criticisms of the centrist SAP in the same article.

Hard Trotskyist Stand Needed

In the absence of explicit principled programmatic counterposition, the OCI's single-minded concentration on the slogan of the united class front for an SP-CP government amounts to little more than the Pabloist concept of the Trotskyists as a "left pressure group" on the Stalinists. Blunting the edge of criticism of the CP can only mean tail-ending the CGT bureaucrats. By its lack of substantial and direct public criticism of the CP, the OCI logically liquidates its very reason for existence and withholds from militants the very tool they need to break from the CP toward Trotskyism. There is at least one sizeable group in France (the Centres d'Initiative Communiste) which broke with the CP in 1968 only to replace Stalinism with a hodge-podge of views. Without a clear Trotskyist pole, dissatisfied CP militants are likely to become simply demoralized and eventually leave politics altogether. But the OCI does not present a hard Trotskyist face. For example, during anti-war demonstrations the OCI disperses its cadre into

union sections rather than marching under its own banner. The OCI rarely engages in serious public polemics with other ostensibly revolutionary tendencies in France, ignoring the responsibility to seek to polarize and split centrist currents on a hard programmatic basis.

Over and over, the OCI insists that it is dangerous to be "too far ahead" of the masses, and is critical of "iron Bolsheviks" as being sectarian. In the "Political Report for the National Conference of Militants for the Workers' Government," the OCI's emphasis on unity leads it to restrict demands to what is "immediately realizable": "Of course, there can be no question of advocating measures before they impose themselves on political reality as well as in the consciousness of the masses."

Centrism or Trotskyism

In practice, the OCI constantly sacrifices the explicit presentation of program to unity at any price—even when that price becomes inevitably a bloc. Thus, the OCI envisaged a Revolutionary Youth International, intended as a grouping in which largely non-Trotskyist organizations of the most disparate nature—from the OCI's unofficial youth group, the Alliance des Jeunes pour le Socialisme, to the U.S. National Student Association—could peacefully coexist. Similarly, in order to maintain for years the "International Committee" bloc with Gerry Healy's SLL, the OCI acquiesced to a federated concept of international organization. In the course of the IC split, the OCI's alliance with the Bolivian Partido Obrero Revolucionario pushed the OCI to vehemently defend the POR's classically POUMist line, especially over the key question of political criticism within a united working-class formation.

More recently, the OCI has allowed its international youth policy to die a quiet death, publicly criticized the POR, and declared its intention to develop a democratic-centralist international organization. But unless the OCI makes a clear and explicit self-criticism of its past opportunism, its cadres will necessarily continue to accept as "Trotskyism" the opportunist policies in which the OCI has schooled them.

The size of the demonstration at Pierre Overney's funeral despite CP opposition is a sign that France could at any time see a working-class upsurge which could easily out-strip the bounds of CP control. None of the ostensibly Trotskyist organizations are in a position to take the leadership of the class at the present moment, although the OCI feels it will be able to do so within a few years. For that to happen, however, the OCI will have to assume hegemony over the other left tendencies by defeating them politically. If the OCI is to play a part in deepening such an upsurge into decisive gains for the Trotskyist movement, the OCI *must*, through internal struggle, confront its past and repudiate its centrist policies. ■

At Labor for Peace, TUAD:

Fake Lefts Conciliate Union Bureaucrats



Labor for Peace Conference, chaired by UAW Secretary-Treasurer Emil Mazey.

The "Labor for Peace" Conference held in St. Louis on June 23-24 and the TUAD (Trade Unionists For Action and Democracy) "Emergency Election Conference" held in Chicago the following weekend were yet two more attempts by the "progressive" labor bureaucrats and their friends in the reformist Communist Party to head off and contain the growing discontent of the American working class. The liberal labor bureaucrats, faced with intense rank-and-file pressure stemming from the present capitalist crisis, want to make sure that Nixon gets the blame for the Kennedy-Johnson war in Vietnam and for unemployment, wage control legislation, inflation, etc. Thoroughly committed to the capitalist system, they must hold back the struggle and attempt to deflect it into a harmless "dump Nixon" protest, since in a real class-struggle explosion, they would be swept away as so much vermin.

The forcible exclusion of virtually the entire left wing by Stalinists at the TUAD Conference dominated the proceedings. This violence was the familiar handmaiden to the Communist Party's policy of a bureaucratic pop-front alliance with the latest darling of the liberal bourgeoisie, George McGovern.

"Pay for Peace"

The bureaucrats' and CP's pious phrases about "peace" and political independence are completely without meaning since they oppose *action* toward these goals in the form of striking against the war and building an independent party of labor. The only proposed immediate activity of the Labor for Peace group was that rank-and-file trade unionists should contribute one day's pay for "peace activity" and lobby for peace in Washington. TUAD sent a delegation to the Democratic National Convention to "place demands to candidates as a condition of support from rank-and-file workers." TUAD opposes the formation of a labor party as "not in the cards" at this time. This is a very old excuse which

many bureaucrats themselves have used for decades to keep labor tied to the two capitalist parties.

The talk of "political independence" really means freedom to pick and choose among the capitalist politicians and to wheel and deal at the ballot box. The major theme of both conferences was to "dump Nixon" and while neither conference openly endorsed any particular candidate, criticism of George McGovern was notably absent. On the day preceding the Labor for Peace Conference, two of its initiators, Harold Gibbons, vice-president of the Teamsters Union, and David Livingston, vice-president of the Distributive Workers of America, had joined with former Defense Secretary Clark Clifford and Mayor Lindsay to demand that the Democratic Party adopt an "end the war plank." Since the Democratic National Convention many of the sponsors of the Labor for Peace and TUAD Conferences have openly declared their support for McGovern, seeing their role as maintaining a left pressure on the Democratic Party.

While Labor For Peace represents the broadest liberal segment of the trade union bureaucracy, the smaller TUAD represents the continuing effort of the Communist Party, the most unashamedly reformist group on the left, to forge an alliance with these labor liberals. The CP, like the bureaucracy as a whole, sees its role as applying "pressures" within the system. Although they are running their own candidates in the election, these hypocrites are really for McGovern; they see their "campaign" only as a pressure on him and the other Democrats, whom they will support anyway as a "lesser evil": "The CP campaign's aim is to push the entire election leftward, to make sure candidates such as McGovern are not allowed to abandon their liberal planks in order to satisfy more conservative supporters" (*Daily World*, 23 June).

It is this position that holds labor back, preventing it from fighting for its *class* interests. It was liberal Democrats (and their labor bureau-

crat friends) who sponsored the wage control legislation which Nixon now uses to drive down real wages. It was the Democratic Party of Humphrey, Muskie, McGovern, Chisholm, Abzug, and Dellums that first involved the U.S. directly in Vietnam. McGovern himself, praised as "clear-cut" on the war, has voted against repeal of the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, voted for the 1967 Vietnam war appropriations, and supports NATO and SEATO. The Democrats are a savage, racist party which is even more useful to the capitalists than the Republicans, particularly in times of crisis, so long as the masses retain more illusions about it. The Democrats' new "reformed" image does not alter this, but is rather an example of how the Democratic Party superficially adapts, chameleon-like, to its environment in order to continually recreate these illusions.

Failure on the Left

The gyrations of the labor bureaucracy make it imperative to pose a clear-cut, *class* alternative to their sellout policies. The fake alternatives presented by the various left groups which sought to intervene in the Labor for Peace and TUAD Conferences only sow confusion, further the illusions, and deepen the crisis of leadership of the U.S. working class.

The Workers League (WL) and its supporters presented the same proposal, "On the Labor Party," to both conferences. It stated: "be it resolved that this Labor for Peace [TUAD] Conference demand that the American labor movement—the AFL/CIO, UAW, Teamsters and all other independent unions immediately call a Congress of Labor for the purpose of launching an independent labor party for the 1972 election." In typical opportunist fashion, this frenzied sect seeks to grossly inflate its own influence on the American labor movement by claiming that the question of the labor party framed in this way as an *immediate* question for the '72 elections, dominated the entire discussion at both conferences! This obvious absurdity is a cover for the WL's failure to struggle for a principled *program* counter to the bureaucracy's and, in the case of TUAD, for their complete failure to protest or even recognize the importance of the massive exclusion of leftists.

Workers League:

Puffed-Up Cover for Bureaucracy

In reality the labor party question was dismissed out of hand by such statements as Jerry Wurf's (president of the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees), who said "We must talk in terms of what we can achieve, not in utopian terms" and that workers must "show their power at the ballot box." When the WL proposal was presented on the floor of the Labor for Peace Conference, it was ruled out of order by the chairman (Emil Mazey, Secretary-Treasurer of the United Auto Workers)

continued on page 14



Left: Workers League members block hallway leading to "open" UAW Rank and File Caucus meeting; Right: Prominent WL spokesman enters TUAD Conference after WL failed to protest exclusion.