

# On the Struggle for a Principled Marxist Stand

*An article stressing the need to repudiate thoroughly the reformist ideas and fuse the Marxist-Leninist revolutionary teachings with the workers' movement in Australia in order to build up a new-type Marxist party which integrates theory with practice was carried in the No. 9 (December 1964) issue of "The Australian Communist," theoretical journal of the Communist Party of Australia (Marxist-Leninist). Excerpts from the article follow. Boldface emphases are ours. — Ed.*

**T**HE article says: "True, the development of capitalism in Australia together with the successful socialist revolution in the Soviet Union did result in the formation of a Communist Party in Australia in 1920 — a formal step was taken in the direction of acquiring rational knowledge and the development of revolutionary activity.

"However, although here and there efforts were made to break through the economism which was a feature of the Australian labour movement, in fact it was never achieved within the framework of this old Communist Party.

"To understand fully the final abandonment of Marxism by the leadership of this Party in 1962, and their complete conversion to revisionist positions, we need to look further than the pressures and manoeuvrings of the 1960s. We need to go back over the whole period of the 40 years existence of the old C.P. of A. to appreciate that despite the desires and wishes of a big majority of its members to embrace the ideology of Marxism, it failed to do thorough, consistent battle with the ideas of reformism."

The article points out that it is necessary to make further study of Sharkey's "Trade Unions," "The History of the Australian Labour Movement" and "Socialism in Australia" to see whether or not they bear the imprint of that approach which Lenin devoted so much of his time to combating — the imprint of economism.

For example — Sharkey wrote "Socialism in Australia" in the middle 50s. It was a reply to G.D.H. Cole's "World Socialism Restated" and Dr. Burton's "Labour in Transition." Sharkey takes Professor Cole to task on questions of interpretation of Marxist political economy. Ironically enough, many of these propositions of Cole are now being used by Sharkey's colleagues to justify their claims about the "exceptional" character of Australian capitalist economy, the relative "prosperity" of the Australian workers, the absence of "misery" in Australia, etc.

The article says: "Sharkey then proceeds to discuss these Labour Party proposals with which he disagrees in the light of 'Marxism.' On page 46 of the same pamphlet, he says: 'our Party Programme commits us to the possibility of a peaceful transition to socialism, that is, without armed insurrection.' In other words, in the name of the Communist Party, he commits the Communist Party to parliamentarism."

Quoting a passage from Lenin's letter to the Central Committee of the Social-Democratic Labour Party (Bolshevik) the article points out that the above-mentioned proposal of Sharkey completely runs counter to Lenin's viewpoints. Lenin pointed out in this letter that where the conditions for revolution exist, "it would be a betrayal of Marxism and of the revolution to refuse to consider insurrection as an art."

This passage has been included for the purpose of showing that **the views of Sharkey had nothing in common with Marx and Lenin on this question.** It has been included to show that **Sharkey was refuting Labour Party reformist theories in the name of Communism — of Marxism — with a statement which is non-Marxist!**

Moreover, Sharkey shows in all of this concluding section of his pamphlet that this is no accidental matter — no small slip on his part. The concluding section discusses loosely a "genuine, socialist, people's government" and "in a socialist society, parliament would remain as the organ of government."

Sharkey, in the name of Marxism, rejects the dictatorship of the proletariat but no word of protest was heard from any of us about these or any other words. So the criticism must be one which is not only levelled against Sharkey, but must point to a general absence of theoretical clarity in the old Communist Party.

Much has already been written in recent times about Sharkey's incorrect analysis of the A.L.P. itself — his designation of that party as a "two class Party" instead of a party of capitalism enjoying the support of the working class.

The article points out, **"Opportunist tendencies, present for a long time, developed into full-fledged revisionism in most of the leaders of the old C.P. of A. But it also had its other side. It brought the realization to a number of the full import and pending disaster for the Australian working class movement when opportunist tendencies were allowed to run unchecked. For the first time in the history of the revolutionary movement in Australia, the ground was set for a qualitative leap forward in the struggle to acquire rational knowledge, to understand the revolutionary import of Marx and Lenin's teachings — to integrate these with Australian**

**conditions — to fuse socialist theory with the Australian working-class movement.**

“It still requires much effort — possibly painful effort — to master theory more effectively and in the process of practice to examine the inroads of U.S. imperialism into Australia — to carry out the fundamental task of criticism of the ideology of reformism — the ideology which acts as a brake upon the working-class movement. But unquestionably the first steps have been taken.

“It follows from all this that if one wishes to avoid the mistakes of the past, a firm Marxist ideology must at all times take up a principled revolutionary stand — it must unceasingly wage war upon opportunism — upon the ideas of the ruling class in the working class movement.”

The article then criticizes the wrong stand taken by the Australian revisionist group in the senate elections held in December, last year. The group printed a statement in the *Guardian* of November 18, in connection with the senate election, making its starting point the extraordinary view that “world tension has eased”!

“This, in face of stepped-up U.S. imperialist action in south Viet Nam — U.S. threats against Laos and Cambodia — increased tension between Indonesia and neo-colonialist Malaysia — to say nothing of Menzies’ bellicose threats against Indonesia — the war going on in the Congo — the proposal to issue NATO with nuclear weapons. In fact, even in their own statement they cannot avoid making some mention of these things — directly refuting their own conclusion that ‘world tension has eased.’

“But instead of a clear warning on the plans of U.S. imperialism these things are glossed over and Menzies’ proposals for conscription and increased ‘defence’ expenditure are presented rather as a stunt in connection with the senate elections.

“How can this be? It stems, initially, from revisionist estimates on a world scale that U.S. imperialism in general is no longer of a militarist, violent character. There are supposedly progressive U.S. imperialists (Johnson and the late President Kennedy) and reactionary U.S. imperialists (Goldwater). Therefore, every effort is made to overlook the facts — the acts of aggression for which this supposedly progressive section of U.S. imperialism is responsible no longer mean aggression — tension is relaxed.

“The theory reaches its fulfilment with the attitude to the Labour Party. If one opposes U.S. imperialist aggression, it follows one must oppose the policy and activity of the Labour Party leaders because these leaders are fully committed to support of U.S. imperialism.

“Crawling on their hands and knees, begging for some unity with these A.L.P. leaders (leaders who have betrayed the working class again and again), the revisionist leaders of the C.P. will not criticize from a fun-

damental class standpoint but will gloss over unpleasant truths and fasten upon something around which they can call for ‘unified action.’ They fail to see, or in fact have never understood, that the masses will rise in struggle any way, against those measures which would oppress them.”

The article stresses that **hand-in-hand with the battle for a firm Marxist ideology is the effort to build up a Marxist party of a new type.** “Again here too, much of value can be learnt from the mistakes of the old party — what not to do can be seen much more clearly.

“One of the most outstanding errors of the old C.P. was the separation of theory from practice. On the one hand were what was termed the ‘practical workers’ — on the other hand ‘the theoreticians.’ The practical workers were usually lost in the mass movement because without a firm revolutionary theory they lost course — had no idea how to participate in struggle and fuse socialist theory with this mass movement. They simply had no theory.

“The ‘theoreticians’ in the main consisted of the full-time workers who were far removed from the actual struggle — who spent most of their days and nights, too, discussing things amongst themselves or directing the mass worker on how to carry out the work of which they themselves had had no experience.

“This method of work completely violates the fundamental connection between knowing and doing — the process of study — applying the limited knowledge we acquire to social practice, to the field of class struggle — returning enriched to our study again — back to social practice on a higher level and so on. Always with the final objective in mind — the creation of a revolutionary organization to carry out its revolutionary tasks.

“This in no way suggests that one must directly experience everything. That in itself is an impossibility. A great deal is also learnt from the experience of social practice of others — but it can only be properly learnt, it can only become real knowledge, if one is also participating directly in the mass struggle, if one has roots deep among the masses.

“So that a really revolutionary organization must end the separation of theory and practice. Every member must understand the unbreakable connection between knowing and doing. Only thus will the organization consist of people of a ‘new mould’ — people steeled in revolutionary theory and practice — putting an end to the diffuse, undisciplined groping of people who would follow their own particular bent or idea — creating an ‘organization that will be ready at any moment to support every protest and every outbreak and to utilize these for the purpose of increasing and strengthening the military forces fit for the decisive battle.’ (Lenin)

“So the Marxist party is created in life, in a struggle. Neither its formal setting-up or the building of its

**branches, is a matter of making a pronouncement, of declaring ourselves to be in existence."**

The article concludes by saying: "Already we have many things in our favour.

"We have a core of enthusiastic people who have emerged from the first real battle against deep-seated opportunist ideas and organization. . . .

"We have publications which can analyse not only the breadth of revolutionary struggle on a world scale but can apply this to our own reality in Australia. . . .

**"Finally, we have a vast reservoir of support among the masses, who contrary to the revisionists' views, respond eagerly to the truth of Marxist-Leninist ideas. It is our job to make this truth available."**