



Socialist Worker



Workers at British Leylands protest against Labour's wage restraint (top). Michael Foot, prominent Labour left, heads the "joint consultative committee" which gives Liberals a say in government policy.

## Break the Liberal/Labour coalition in Britain!

Britain came close to its third general election in as many years [last month] when Labour Prime Minister James Callaghan was forced to conclude a last-minute pact with the small bourgeois Liberal Party to avert defeat in a Conservative no-confidence motion. The significance of this formal parliamentary bloc was summed up by Liberal leader David Steel, who commented that "Socialism is the one thing this country will not get so long as this agreement lasts ..." (*Guardian* [London], 25 March 1977).

Steel has a point. Not that anyone in Britain believes that the Labour government was headed toward socialism --

### Report from London

but the long-standing allegiance of the British working class to the Labour Party is primarily due to its claim to somehow stand for the class interests of the proletariat, and its vague rhetorical commitment to some sort of "socialism". The Labour cabinet's precarious parliamentary position meant that it was forced to conclude an agreement with the Liberals in order to cling to power. The price was to give up the claim to represent key working-class interests or "socialism", at least for the duration of the bloc.

Of course, Labour would much prefer to retain the fig leaf of socialist rhetoric as a cover for its nakedly anti-working-class Social Contract (wage restraint). Callaghan's parliamentary predicament results from the loss of a string of supposedly "safe" Labour seats to the Tories [Conservatives] in recent by-elections. This in itself provides an index to the deep dissatisfaction of masses of Labour Party supporters with the Callaghan government and its plans to "save" the economy by further attacking the workers' pathetic living standards.

The by-elections losses combined with the defection of two Scottish Labour MPs has changed Labour's slim majority with which it was elected in 1974 into a minority, and has meant that for the past several months the government has been depending on the votes of at least some of the 41 MPs who belong to the minor parties in order to stave off a vote of no-confidence. Until recently the government had been able to count on the 16 votes of the Scots and Welsh nationalists. However, Labour's failure to secure passage in Parliament last February of its Devolution Bill (providing for federal institutions in Scotland and Wales under the rubric of "home rule") due to the refusal of hard-core Labour "unionists" -- opponents of devolution -- to support the government's proposal has meant that the nationalists are now bending all their efforts to bring down the cabinet and thus precipitate an early election.

In its search for support in the House of Commons, the Labour Party was conducting parallel negotiations with the ten MPs of the United Ulster Unionists, the reactionary parliamentary representatives of the Protestant ascendancy in Northern Ireland. Among their number are the fanatical Rev Ian Paisley, and the notorious racist Enoch Powell. The bargaining with the Ulster Unionists was over more MPs from the province and also doubtless on demands for more British army units to suppress the Irish Catholic minority. But apparently Callaghan wasn't able to negotiate a satisfactory deal with the Unionist MPs and seven of them voted with Margaret Thatcher's Tories.

The terms of the parliamentary coalition with the Liberals were carefully outlined in a joint statement issued just before the debate on the no-confidence motion. Essentially the agreement establishes a "joint consultative committee" continued on page six

## IRB, wage freeze — Fraser tightens noose

# Labor premiers: Fraser's lackeys

Less than two weeks after Sir John Moore's Arbitration Commission announced a December quarter indexation decision which effectively reduced real wages by nearly three percent (by granting a 3.2 percent increase in the wake of a six percent rise in the Consumer Price Index), workers were presented with yet another opportunity to sacrifice for the "national interest". Millionaire Malcolm Fraser emerged from a two-day conference with six state premiers on 13 April to proclaim their unanimous decision in favour of a three-month "voluntary wage-price pause" to begin immediately. What followed was a dizzying carousel of bargaining, bluster and backtracking, proposals and counter-proposals sufficient to leave the most perspicacious observer confused from one day to the next. The one thing which did emerge with striking clarity was the openly contemptuous unconcern of the ALP and ACTU bureaucrats for the interests and livelihoods of the workers they purport to represent.

The proposed price "pause" is a fraud. Retail prices have continued to climb since the announcement. Perishable goods (which account for one-fifth of consumer budgets) and imported items are exempted, and major manufacturers adjust prices only 2-3 times per year in any case. What the "wage-price pause" amounts to is a wage freeze which would cut even deeper into workers' dwindling living standards.

If, as we go to press, the future of the freeze appears to be a questionable proposition, that is due largely to the bungling obstinacy of Fraser himself. Not only did Billy Neilson, trendy Don Dunstan and "nifty" Neville Wran, the Labor premiers for Tasmania, South Australia and New South Wales respectively, endorse the scheme to begin with, they have since done everything possible to salvage this attack on the workers from being scuttled by Fraser's follies. When Fraser precipitously demanded that the Arbitration Commission in effect make the wage freeze compulsory by deferring the 3 May wage hearing for three months -- without calling a national conference of unions, employers and governments which the premiers had all agreed was necessary to sell the wage freeze to the workers -- Dunstan warned that Fraser was heading the freeze "for disaster": "What he has proposed can only enrage the unions" (quoted in the *Australian*, 21 April). Wran advised his bourgeois colleague in Canberra to be patient: "... Mr Fraser should not be quick to close the door on a chance to let Australians put their country first" (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 21 April). In fact, with the exception of deputy Opposition leader Tom Uren -- whose "leftist" pretensions led him to oppose the freeze ... verbally -- the gamut of ALP parliamentarians, Whitlam included, have used the opportunity to demonstrate that



continued on page two Labor premiers Neville Wran (left) and Don Dunstan.

Press agents for religious fanatics and PLO nationalists

# SLL enthuses over Near East communal slaughter

The fake-Trotskyist Socialist Workers Party (SWP) has years of experience prostrating itself before the "progressive" bourgeois Arab nationalist regimes and its chosen "vanguard" of the so-called "Arab Revolution", the petty-bourgeois Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO). Yet it is little wonder that these Pabloists have, of late, placed some distance between themselves and their erstwhile heroes. Only months after the Syrian Ba'athist regime invaded Lebanon -- where its army proceeded to butcher thousands of Palestinians -- the Egyptian army was mobilised to massacre dozens of protesting workers in the streets of Cairo and Alexandria. Meanwhile the PLO leadership has been making it clear that it is prepared to settle for some "mini-state" bantustan "solution" to the "Palestinian problem". While continuing to promote "solidarity" with the PLO and "progressive" Arab nationalism, the SWP has suddenly realised that the Egyptian and Syrian regimes, hailed as resolute fighters for the national rights of the Palestinian people in the 1973 October War, are "reactionary" and that the PLO is "petty-bourgeois nationalist", "pro-capitalist" and guilty of largely unspecified "mistakes" (*Direct Action*, 3 March).

But this slight breach has been more than filled by none other than the self-proclaimed "anti-Pabloites" of the Healyite Socialist Labour League (SLL), who now put even the SWP to shame with their fervent promotion of the "Arab Revolution". In 1962, when the Healy tendency was waging a genuine, albeit somewhat deformed, struggle against Pabloist revisionism and the growing degeneration of the American SWP, it denounced the SWP's enthusing over the petty-bourgeois nationalist Algerian FLN as follows:

"No attempt whatever is made at any general evaluation of this new animal, the 'Arab revolution'. Instead of a concrete analysis of the Egyptian, Syrian and Iraqi experiences, we have acceptance at face values of the claims of the Arab leaders themselves. Meanwhile their jails remain full of communists and militant workers. The SWP by this position, falls along with the Pabloites into conniving at similar results in Algeria...." ("Trotskyism Betrayed", 21 July 1962)

The Healyites have since abandoned Trotskyism in favour of political banditry, brutal thuggery and apolitical community youth work. The rapid degeneration of the British Healy group was confirmed in 1967 when it came out for political support to the Mao faction of the Chinese Stalinist bureaucracy during the factional infighting of the "Cultural Revolution", to the Vietnamese Stalinists led by the treacherous Ho Chi Minh, and to the self-same idealist nationalism of the "Arab Revolution" it had denounced several years earlier. Often outdoing their erstwhile opponents in Pabloist renegacy, they now attack the SWP not for its revisionist politics but through slanderous accusations that longtime US SWP leaders, Joseph Hansen and George Novack, were accomplices to Trotsky's assassination.

When Spartacist League (SL) supporters at a recent Palestine teach-in at Sydney University

2-3 April (largely organised by the SWP) counterposed to the SWP's fawning adaptation to Palestinian nationalism the orthodox Trotskyist position against nationalism and for a united revolutionary struggle by Arab and Hebrew workers to overthrow all the bourgeois regimes in the Near East, the most vitriolic response came from SLL leader Jim Mulgrew. Bombastically slandering our comrades as "half-witted reactionaries", Mulgrew denounced their Trotskyist politics as "pro-Zionist", "abstentionist" and "pacifist" and acclaimed as "revolutionary" the PLO leadership and the recently assassinated Kamal Jumblatt, who led the "Muslim-left alliance" in last year's communal bloodbath in Lebanon.

But Mulgrew did not stop with his spirited defence of these aspiring servants of imperialism. When Rod Webb, ex-AUS officer, noted that anyone in Fateh, the PLO's military-guerrilla arm, who admitted to being a Marxist was virtually signing his own death warrant, Mulgrew denounced Webb as a liar and incredibly declared

the PLO's internal regime to be "democratic". Besides, any criticism of the PLO was "abstract and academic" since it "had been fighting for thirty years gun in hand" (startling news since the PLO only took up armed struggle after dumping its former openly pro-imperialist leader, Ahmed Shukairy, in 1967) and would continue the "revolutionary struggle" as long as it didn't "lay down its guns"! The latter is particularly interesting since the British Healyite Workers Revolutionary Party (WRP) less than two years ago condemned terrorism "in principle" and promised the bourgeoisie that "Any member of the WRP carrying firearms would be immediately expelled" (*Workers News*, 16 October 1975). But consistency has never been a virtue associated with these political bandits. And to prove it, Mulgrew then did an about-face and praised Arafat's cynical diplomatic wheeling and dealing (which culminated recently in Arafat's embrace of Jordanian king

Continued on page seven

While SLL leader Mulgrew (right) calls for more and better inter-communal pogroms in Near East, his British mentors laud their new hero, Libyan dictator Colonel Qaddafi (left).



ASp Photo

## Wage freeze . . .

Continued from page one

they could manage the bourgeoisie's "national interest" and suppress the workers much more adeptly than Fraser's L/NCP coalition.

The union officialdom, more immediately accessible to the workers' outrage and undoubtedly piqued that Dunstan and Wran had not bothered to consult them beforehand, put up a more "militant" front and rejected the freeze proposal outright in four states: NSW, Victoria, Queensland and South Australia. Nowhere, of course, did they openly condemn their treacherous parliamentary comrades or propose any concrete actions to reverse Fraser's union-bashing drive. Short days later, at a 19 April special hearing of the Arbitration Commission, Bob Hawke presented the ACTU Executive's real response -- which was lifted almost directly from Rupert Hamer, the Victorian Liberal premier, who had proposed the freeze in the first place. Hawke's "demands"? Call the already proposed national conference, strengthen the Prices Justification Tribunal (which has no strength in any case), give us a tax cut ... and we'll not only accept the "pause" but withdraw our application for a wage rise based on productivity increases as well!

The ACTU's stance is so "reasonable" that its allies include, among others, Moore and the National Employers' Policy Committee (who embraced the conference call) and the managing director of Chrysler Australia (who supports a tax cut)! In fact, Fraser's only support in obstinately rejecting the call for a conference -- until the unions unconditionally accept a wage freeze "in principle" (ie, until there is no room for Hawke to even save face) -- seems to be limited at present to his own Cabinet, the vitriolically anti-union Fairfax and Murdoch press empires and arch-reactionary Queensland premier, Joh Bjelke-Petersen.

In line with their own appetites to return to a position of managing the capitalists' economy, the Labor bureaucrats have dismissed Fraser's union-bashing drive (including the proposed Industrial Relations Bureau [IRB]) as an attempt to divert attention from his mismanagement of the economy. We do not venture to guess what passes through Fraser's mind, but one thing is clear: the labour misleaders themselves are attempting to divert the workers' attention from mobilising a struggle against Fraser's attacks.

The IRB bill, which has already been intro-

duced into Parliament, would allow for deregistration of unions hindering any public service or commerce between the states or with other countries or engaging in "political" strikes, and additionally allow for suspension of union officials and sequestration of funds (*National Times*, 11-16 April). Together with a proposed amendment to the Trade Practices Act (which has also been introduced) which would outlaw secondary boycotts, among other things, and yet a third bill being considered which would penalise employers who agree to wage increases won outside the Arbitration Commission, the unions as defensive organisations of the class would be legally paralysed. These bills must be smashed through immediate general strike action!

While Hawke was pleading Hamer's program before the Arbitration Commission, Hamer -- whose reputation for ruthless strikebreaking was established by his draconian response to the Newport power station ban (see *ASp* no 38, December 1976) -- was undoubtedly scheming how to smash a strike by Victorian petrol tanker drivers and oil refuellers. The first significant union challenge to the last indexation wage cut, the strike posed the explosive potential of smashing the indexation wage freeze. Leaving the threats and bluster to Hamer, Hawke worked overtime behind the scenes to ram through a sellout which, on the key wage demand of a \$5.70 rise to make up for the indexation cut, reportedly gave the workers only 80 cents!

Whether or not Fraser/Dunstan/Wran's wage freeze goes through, the labour movement must break from the bureaucracy's class-collaborationist reliance on the bosses' arbitration and mobilise its strength to extend strikes like that of the Victorian transport workers into a generalised wage offensive. Real wages will have fallen 6.4 percent since last September by the end of this quarter! The extent of the workers' losses was unwittingly revealed by Fraser himself when he pointed to the massive \$1600 million in tax cuts which would be required to offset the wage "restraint". The ACTU bureaucracy's reformist policies of tinkering with bourgeois fiscal schemes and proposing talk-shops with the bosses must be repudiated and replaced by a leadership committed to a consistent policy of class struggle and the expropriation of the capitalist class under a workers government. ■

### Australasian SPARTACIST



a monthly organ of revolutionary Marxism for the rebirth of the Fourth International published by Spartacist Publications for the Central Committee of the Spartacist League of Australia and New Zealand, section of the international Spartacist tendency

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SUBSCRIPTIONS: Three dollars for the next twelve issues (one year).

AUSTRALASIAN SPARTACIST is registered at the GPO, Sydney for posting as a newspaper -- Category C.

Printed by Maxwell Printing Company Pty Ltd,  
862 Elizabeth Street, Waterloo, NSW 2017.



As Stalinists push austerity —

# Italy rocked by student strikes

[For much of March and April] Italy has been rocked by the most massive student protests since the "l'Autunno Caldo" (Hot Autumn) upheavals of 1969. Nearly all major Italian universities have been hit with militant student strikes and occupations, while in Rome, Bologna, Torino and Milano demonstrating youth have repeatedly clashed with armed fascist bands as well as riot police backed up by tanks.

"Large parts of Rome's ancient center looked like a battle field today, with burned out cars, smashed shops and ransacked offices, restaurants and nightclubs", declared the *New York Times* March 14. Another account from the week before reported, "Rome smelled of burning rubber, tear-gas, and the sounds were those of police sirens and of bullets being fired" (London *Guardian*, 7 March). As the political protests escalated the bourgeoisie attempted to whip up an anti-radical hysteria; the newsweekly *L'Espresso* (20 March) questioned, "Is this the beginning of the Italian civil war?"

The student-centered struggles erupted last month in response to new university reforms proposed by the minority Christian Democratic [CD] government of prime minister Giulio Andreotti. In line with the "stangata" (austerity measures) already imposed by the Andreotti regime (including restraints on industrial wage increases, cuts in cost-of-living allowances, reduction on the 17 paid holidays and large hikes in gasoline and cigarette prices), the education reforms drawn up by minister of education Malfatti would reverse key gains won as a result of the student struggles of 1969 -- in particular, the open admissions policy. With the unemployed now numbering 1,200,000 and steadily increasing, the Malfatti counter-reforms would close the Italian universities to many plebeian youth who otherwise face only joblessness and a precarious lumpen existence.

Simmering discontent exploded into massive demonstrations on February 2 when a student protest at the University of Rome was attacked by a gang of fascists, who left one student critically wounded. Later, when thousands gathered at the university to protest the fascist attack, the cops repeatedly provoked the demonstrators; then, without warning, two men emerged from the police lines and opened fire on the students with machine guns, seriously wounding two.

At once barricades went up at the University of Rome, as outraged students poured into the streets. Tensions soared, leading the chief of police to ban all student demonstrations and on February 5 to deploy the *carabinieri* (military police) to surround the University of Rome.

As the battle lines were drawn, the Communist Party of Italy (PCI), the reformist mass workers

number of universities and high schools PCI youth groups were run off campus by militant students.

Early on, and especially in Rome, the leadership of the student upsurge fell into the hands of a melange of New Left leftovers, Maoists, spontaneists and syndicalists grouped under the banner of "Workers Autonomy" -- the name of the workers councils which had arisen in opposition to the PCI during the massive strike wave of 1969. In the period immediately following 1969, these workers councils emerged as a healthy left reaction to the betrayals of the PCI. In the intervening years, however, many of them have returned to the PCI orbit, while the remainder have tended to become increasingly marginal to the organized proletariat. More recently, the name "Workers Autonomy" has been appropriated by New Leftist and workerist elements for their own purposes.

Thus, strong tendencies toward classical ultra-leftism -- opposition to trade unions as such and to the Leninist conception of the party -- can find expression in anti-Communist outbursts. While many of the militants in "Workers Autonomy" would find their way to a revolutionary party, if one existed in Italy, a few could turn to the fascists in their disillusion with the "left".

On the one hand, some tendencies in "Workers Autonomy" have raised slogans against any sacrifices for the government and correctly exposed the de facto collaboration of the CP, headed by Berlinguer, with the minority government headed by Andreotti by denouncing the "Berlingotti government". On the other hand, some of these groups have extended their hatred for the reformist PCI to the mass organizations of the working class and to workers organized in ostensibly Leninist groups to the left of the PCI.

Indicative of their hostility to the Stalinist leaders is a "Workers Autonomy" chant, "In Chile it was tanks, in Italy it's the trade unions" (quoted *Cambio 16*, 13 March). Explicitly denying the role of the proletariat in the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism, "Workers Autonomy" groups often counterpose to the working class "student, unemployed, prisoner" vanguardism and an appetite for street confrontation with the repressive forces of the state reminiscent of the early [US] Weathermen.

Prominently included in the "Workers Autonomy" menagerie are dregs of the Italian New Left known as the "Metropolitan Indians" -- the Italian version of [US New Left anarchist] Yippies-cum-Weathermen, but with a far greater following (at least for the moment). The "Metropolitan Indians" espouse a program which calls for repatriation of all animals in the zoos to their country of origin, lowering admissions prices at the movies

groups formed an electoral bloc, Democrazia Proletaria, patterned after the popular-front Unidad Popular of Allende. Refusing to pose an uncompromising left opposition to the CP -- calling for what they themselves admit would be a *bourgeois* "government of the lefts" -- they instead present themselves as the left conscience of the



"Metropolitan Indians" don warpaint during campus seizure.

"Historical Compromise"/popular front. Some militants of "Workers Autonomy" are not incorrect in seeing that these groups offer no consistent alternative to the CP. In the past year, these groups have suffered considerable political demoralization and organizational disintegration, including major splits in the case of AO and PDUP.

On February 17 the confrontation between the PCI and the "Workers Autonomy" led to a collision at the University of Rome. Luciano Lama, the Stalinist leader of the CGIL trade-union federation, appeared on campus with the stated purpose of addressing the striking students.

A heated debate flared among the students over whether or not Lama should be allowed to speak. Both the "Workers Autonomy" and the "Metropolitan Indians" called for excluding Lama (the banners of the "Metropolitan Indians" carried the slogan, "Lamas Belong in Tibet"), but they were outvoted by the majority of striking students, who wanted a debate with Lama. Among other things, this vote revealed that, despite sensationalist press accounts, the "Metropolitan Indians" were by no means the recognized, hegemonic leadership of the striking students.

But no sooner did the "Metropolitan Indians" and "Workers Autonomy" come face to face with the throng of PCI "marshals" (several hundred strong) than fists began to fly. Just who started the brawl remains murky, but the result was that scores were injured on both sides and Lama was forced to flee campus.

After the melee at the University of Rome the PCI stiffened its opposition to the student strikers. When the cops attacked the University of Rome (using bulldozers and a tear gas barrage that soon covered the city) only hours after Lama was driven off campus, a PCI leader was quoted as saying, "We should have sent in the *carabinieri* immediately" (*L'Espresso*, 27 February).

At the same time, the University of Rome free-for-all produced critical reactions to the PCI trade-union leaderships. When 30,000 students staged a march through Rome on February 19 to denounce the PCI's "Little Prague", their banner carried the slogan, "Workers, Students, Women, Unemployed, Against the Government of the Abstentions" (referring to the PCI's "non-mistrust" abstentions in parliament which keep the CD minority government from falling). Moreover, three factory councils in the Rome district condemned the PCI intervention at the University of Rome (*Lotta Continua*, 20 February). Even the Stalinist youth federation took the PCI leadership to task for having demonstrated "gross political insensitivity" (quoted in *Lotta Continua*, 25 February).

In the weeks that followed the political tensions and small-scale confrontations continued to mount. Then, on March 11 during a student demonstration in Bologna which had been called to pro-

Continued on page seven



From left, Italy's Berlinguer, Spain's Carrillo, France's Marchais: "Eurocommunists" push sellout popular fronts.

party, rushed to the defense of the CD government. But this is nothing new. The PCI keeps the Christian Democracy in office through abstentions in parliament, just as it uses its authority and control over the mass organizations of the Italian working class to enforce the "stangata". Firmly committed to implementing its so-called "Historic Compromise" the PCI was concerned once again with convincing the Christian Democracy that they need the Stalinists to maintain capitalist "law and order".

Given that the PCI proposal for educational reforms dovetails with the Malfatti measures, the PCI from the outset set itself against the student protests. The PCI's *L'Unita* printed not a single word about the students shot by the fascists and cops, but seized upon the subsequent wounding of a policeman to "prove" that the seizure of the University of Rome was the work of "a handful of provocateurs".

As the struggle escalated the PCI youth federation (the FGIC) was quickly left behind. So despised was its pro-"stangata" line that at a

and "against capitalism, for criminal struggle". Dedicated to fighting the "white man" the world over, the "Metropolitan Indians" smear their faces in war paint and mindlessly run through the streets brandishing tomahawks, chanting "more work, less pay" and crying, "scemi, scemi" (crazy, crazy) -- bringing to mind the followers of Salvador Dali who in the thirties chanted "Down with intelligence, Long live death". With their anti-union impulses, petty-bourgeois rage and glorification of lumpenism the "Metropolitan Indians" quite conceivably could spawn significant recruits for the fascists, even though at present a blood line separates them.

The fact that the "Workers Autonomy" and "Metropolitan Indians" can at times get a wide hearing among militant students speaks volumes about the repulsive class-collaborationism of the PCI. It also is a damning revelation of the effects of the gross opportunism of the Italian so-called "far left", in particular, the sizable *Lotta Continua*, *Avanguardia Operaia* (AO) and *PDUP* (Party of Proletarian Unity). In the June 1976 Italian elections, these centrist "far-left"

Autonomy is not an option

# Which way forward for women's liberation?

Throughout our four-year history in the Australian radical women's movement, the Spartacist League (SL) has struggled uniquely and consistently for a revolutionary working-class perspective to combat women's oppression. We have argued against the conception that the women's movement could remain "autonomous" from the predominant social forces in capitalist class society -- the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. In opposition to those fake-Marxists who have claimed to "reconcile" or "integrate" the fundamentally bourgeois ideology of feminism with



Women's Battalion of Death: the last defenders of the Winter Palace against the October Revolution, lauded by feminist Emmeline Pankhurst.

Marxism, we have pointed to the intrinsic antagonism between feminist "sisterhood" and class-struggle politics. We have resolutely opposed the false premise that separate organisations of women cut off from the social power of a united proletariat could effect fundamental changes in the burden of oppression women have borne throughout the history of class societies.

The current crisis in the women's movement derives directly from the failure of the "autonomous" women's movement to pose an independent perspective in the November 1975 political crisis, a fact commented on at some length in a recent issue of the "Marxist-feminist" journal *Scarlet Woman*. While many radical women sided with the ALP against the reactionary Kerr/Fraser assault on the working class, they did so largely on the basis of "mourning [bourgeois] democracy" and in defence of the paltry concessions granted by the Whitlam government in a period of relative prosperity. Devoid of a revolutionary Marxist class analysis, the feminists' "critical support" to the reformist ALP leadership because it was "more progressive" was "a perspective that was limited to reforms, that ultimately had to reconcile class conflict in the interests of the bourgeoisie, and not some mirage of 'male power structures'" ("Feminism and the political crisis", *ASP* no 27, 20 December 1975).

Faced with the divergence in practice between feminist assumptions and the realities of the class struggle, it is the "Marxist-feminists" who have felt most threatened by the SL's revolutionary critique of feminism and the "autonomous" women's movement. Thus the recent unsuccessful attempt to purge the SL's communist politics from Sydney Women's Liberation Movement (WLM) was initiated by self-proclaimed "Marxist-feminist" Margo Moore and actively backed by the ostensibly Leninist feminists of the reformist Communist Party of Australia (CPA). The purge attempt catalysed one of the most intensive debates in the recent history of the Australian women's movement.

The very confusion which the debate revealed as to what autonomy means, even among its most ardent advocates, testifies to the falseness of the notion upheld by reformists and radical feminists that the autonomous women's movement is a crucial, historically developed (much less correct) form of organising women to fight their oppression. In fact the "autonomous" women's movement as it exists today developed primarily among women involved in the New Left petty-bourgeois radical movement of the 1960s, in reaction to the gross insensitivity and male chauvinism of the

New Left and the reactionary perversion of the classical Marxist position on the woman question and the nuclear family by Stalinist "Communism". With no revolutionary party to offer a genuine class-struggle alternative and a working class dominated by bourgeois ideology and chauvinist prejudice, these women turned toward the transformation of *personal* consciousness to overturn sexist ideas or attitudes.

Attempting to reject the sexist roles assigned to women but without a historical class perspective, radical women came to the false feminist conclusion that all men, and male workers no less than others, were not merely the agents, but the direct and ultimate beneficiaries and perpetrators of their oppression. Sex, not class, was perceived to be the decisive division in society. Because it works against the development of *class* consciousness by the proletariat, this feminist conception is at bottom simply another form of *bourgeois* ideology.

Marxists understand that fundamental transformations in personal relations can come about only on the basis of a transformation in the relations of production through the revolutionary overthrow of one class by another. Women's oppression, materially rooted in the institution of the nuclear family -- an essential prop to capitalist class rule -- can only be eradicated through the proletariat's destruction of capitalism and its construction of a classless socialist society.

"Marxism-feminism" does not, as it claims to, reconcile the two counterposed ideologies. Unable to ignore the overwhelming historical confirmation of Marxism and the unprecedented gains achieved by women in the Bolshevik Revolution, these opportunists dress up their feminism with "class" rhetoric. They do so by resorting to one or another variant of the New Left's "coalition of the oppressed": each sector of the oppressed fighting its own specific oppression is supposed to coalesce at some future time in a co-ordinated alliance to overthrow capitalism.

Behind this conception is a profound pessimism characteristic of revisionists, anarchists and feminists alike that the proletariat cannot be won to revolutionary consciousness -- to a struggle in the interests of all the oppressed. Far from laying the basis for any future unity, this poly-vanguardist notion pits one sector of the oppressed against another to bicker over the limited pool of concessions which the ruling class is willing, or able, to grant under decaying capitalism.

Moore's article in the March issue of *Scarlet Woman* develops an argument to justify feminist class collaboration and a sympathetic attitude (shared by Malcolm Fraser) to housewives who mobilise to break their husbands' strikes. Moore's argument demonstrates her underlying feminist opposition to basic Marxist conceptions:

"... although the forms of women's oppression differ according to class ... both forms ultimately stem from and service the needs of capital. This recognition forms the material basis for the unity of women and for alliances of women from different classes in a revolutionary struggle." (emphasis in original)

Marxism leads to the exact opposite conclusion: while the form of women's oppression -- the institution of the nuclear family, the denial of formal democratic rights, general sexist attitudes -- are manifestly the same for women of all classes, in different classes they are different in concrete effect. In practice,

bourgeois women have access to numerous privileges by virtue of their own or their family's wealth and social position. Marxism enables us to understand the fact that there is a substantial material basis for bourgeois opposition to socialism, making a "revolutionary" alliance of bourgeois and working-class women impossible. What should be equally clear is that male workers' "benefits" from sexism, as from racism, nationalism, etc, are *completely illusory*: ideological chains which destroy the will and ability of workers to fight their class enemy.

And in fact the working class as a whole will benefit directly from the winning of those demands which are necessary to do away with the conditions underlying women's oppression: to integrate women into the workforce on an equal footing with men; for free abortion on demand; to end women's enforced drudgery in the home through the demand for jobs for all, quality socialised childcare, communal kitchens, laundries, etc; to break down all the barriers of sexual discrimination which benefit only the profit-bloated ruling class. None of these aims are opposed to the real, objective interests of male workers -- but they are opposed to the class privileges of bourgeois women, for they can be achieved only by smashing the system which perpetuates those privileges. The struggle against sexism in the working class and for unity of men and women workers is not a moral imperative. It is a strategic necessity.

In fact strikebreaking by housewives reinforces both the nuclear family -- the role of the male "breadwinner" -- and the sexism of male workers. Not only in the long run, but in its immediate consequences, Moore's "Marxist-feminist" apologia for strikebreaking aids the continued oppression of women, strengthens the sexual divisions in the class and objectively allies with the bosses in labour struggles.

Moore openly acknowledges that her argument for autonomy is based on the premise that there are fundamental conflicts between the interests of men and women workers. The centrist Communist League (CL) claims to reject feminism and to consider the class struggle as primary. Yet, in arguing for the necessity to organise women workers "autonomously" in order to "fight sexism" in the working class, it simply offers up a "pro-working-class" variation on the same theme:

"The organisation of women independent of men is important ... as a factor compelling the workers' leaderships to take the demands of women seriously. Only the organisation of women among themselves at all levels [!] can challenge the sexism of the workers' movement...." (CL leaflet, "For Democracy in the Women's Movement", 17 April 1977)



Mobilised by the bosses, wives and children of striking British Leyland workers demonstrate for a return to work with the slogan "Sack the militants". Australian "Marxist-feminists" including CPA supporters are sympathetic to such strikebreaking.



While the sexism of male workers must be combated ideologically, it is only by making them conscious of the overriding *class* interests they have in common with all working-class women that this sexism can be decisively overcome. In certain instances, where the sexist prejudices are too strong, women workers may be *forced* to organise separately to fight for their interests. But to *unnecessarily* cut themselves off from male workers who support them, to make male-exclusionist "autonomy" a *virtue*, is self-defeating. A struggle against the sexism within the working class requires a political struggle to oust the pro-capitalist, largely male-chauvinist trade-union bureaucracy which consciously restricts and divides the struggles of the working class so as not to threaten the capitalist class (who always make the point that what

they give the "greedy" workers is taken from the pockets of women, blacks, the unemployed, etc). The reformist traitors, of either sex, will never take women's liberation "seriously" because they are hirelings of the capitalists. They must be replaced with a leadership committed to a *revolutionary* program.

Only through the construction of a mass revolutionary workers party, a conscious embodiment of the unifying historic interests of the proletariat, can the working class be mobilised to destroy capitalism. One of the strategic tasks of such a party will be to create *special forms of organisation* in order to mobilise women -- and men -- in a class-struggle fight against *all* manifestations of sexual oppression; and to reach out to politically backward women in the working

class and other oppressed classes, who are largely isolated in the home away from productive life, and win them to the fight for the dictatorship of the proletariat. This is the perspective of a communist women's movement.

The current women's liberation movement must allow the debate over program and perspectives to continue. But it cannot be transformed organically into a force capable of successfully fighting women's oppression. Because of its programmatic heterogeneity and class composition it must inevitably polarise along class lines -- ie counterposed class programs. Autonomy from the *proletarian* class struggle can only lead to increasing subordination to the bourgeoisie. The only movement for women's liberation which can succeed is one which is part of the movement for the proletarian dictatorship. ■

## Reply to SWP on women's movement: Reform or revolution?

The Socialist Workers Party (SWP), which claims to be Trotskyist, responded to the current crisis in the women's movement by attempting to demonstrate, predictably, that nothing is really wrong that a bigger single-issue movement for abortion law reform won't cure. That is the main point of the article, "The crisis in the women's movement: the need for a socialist perspective", by SWP Political Committee member Nita Keig in the March issue of *Socialist Worker*. SWPers normally never so much as mention socialism in their work in the women's movement, but with movement activists debating the relationship

the proletariat against capitalism. But Keig's main point, incredible as it may seem, is that the SL also divorces the women's liberation struggle from the class struggle. Keig's "logic" is that the SL says that *feminism* is not a class struggle ideology, and opposes the feminists' attempt to make the fight against women's oppression "autonomous" from the class struggle whereas the SWP simply *defines* the existing women's movement, *regardless* of its ideology or its actual relationship to the working class, as part of the class struggle.

By this terminological fraud the SWP denies the responsibility of genuine Marxists to make the fight against women's oppression part of the *actual* class struggle. The end result is precisely the same as the CPA's frequent argument that the class struggle concerns purely economic issues. For both, the struggle against cross-class forms of oppression is left to non-proletarian forces and ideologies.

Keig's renunciation of Marxism stems from the revisionist method of Pabloism, which in denying the central role of the Trotskyist vanguard party in the fight for socialist revolution holds that the masses -- once set into motion -- would somehow *objectively* pursue an anti-capitalist course, sweeping their class-collaborationist misleaders along. Similarly, Keig argues that the current feminist movement is *objectively* anti-capitalist: "An attack on the role of women in the family is an attack on this system"; moreover "even the most modest demands of women are going to meet with resistance from the ruling class", forcing them to "see the connection between their oppression and the nature of the society around them".

Keig falsely argues that the feminist reform movements she proposes combat working-class false consciousness which she characterises as "economism". But this false consciousness is more generally a *reformist* consciousness that each section of the class -- and of the oppressed -- struggles exclusively for its own particular needs. No less than the more narrowly defined trade-union economism, the "political consciousness" raising which Keig lauds as "so important about the women's liberation movement" accepts and reinforces the divisions among the oppressed fostered by capitalism.

Instead of seeing the revolutionary party as a "tribune of the people" which mobilises all layers of the oppressed *under the leadership of the working class* in a conscious struggle against capitalism, the SWP relegates the "revolutionary" party to a co-ordinating centre for a coalition of various reform movements, each headed by its own petty-bourgeois "vanguard". Thus under the guise of "anti-economism", the SWP removes from the Leninist conception of the revolutionary party its essential *proletarian* character.

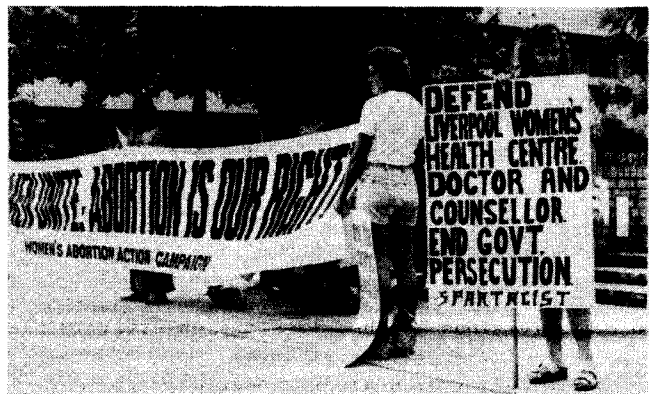
The model for the SWP's "socialist perspective" is the class-collaborationist, single-issue Women's Abortion Action Coalition (WAAC). WAAC is limited to a campaign for legal repeal of reactionary anti-abortion legislation -- a demand derived not from the pressing *objective* needs of women of the oppressed classes, but explicitly designed to be acceptable to broad sectors of the bourgeoisie. This places the SWP to the right even of many radical feminists who don't claim to be Marxists. Even when millions of workers, women and men, were enraged by Fraser's dismantling of Medibank, SWP/WAAC refused to raise the call for free abortion on demand as part of a struggle for quality socialised medical care for all. The demand to strike down the anti-abortion laws is completely supportable, but it is in no way "an attack on the system". In the US, all anti-abortion legislation was struck down several years ago. Far from urging women to struggle around ever better reforms, this "victory" led to the disintegration of WONAAC, the US SWP's anti-

abortion front group, and merely enhanced the reputation of capitalist politicians like feminist Democratic Party congresswoman Bella Abzug, whom WONAAC promoted as a pro-women's rights fighter. Because the SWP refused to raise a perspective beyond pressuring the bourgeois state for an isolated reform, the women it mobilised were not brought to an awareness of the necessity for attacking the fundamental, underlying causes of specific pieces of repressive bourgeois legislation. Though anti-abortion laws are now creeping back in the generalised rightward shift in the American social climate, the end result is cynicism and frustration, not a renaissance of a "mass abortion repeal movement".

With the presence in Australia of a mass reformist workers party, the SWP need not in fact tail after openly bourgeois politicians. For the SWP in Australia the "independent" women's movement is assigned the role of "critical" supporter -- ie, a loyal feminist conscience -- of the class traitors running the ALP. The grossest example of this is WAAC's attempt to have their bill to repeal anti-abortion laws introduced into NSW Parliament ... "if we can get the Labor Government to allow" it (quoted in *Direct Action*, 10 March)!

The first major current of revisionism (and the most honest) to develop within the Marxist movement was articulated by the nineteenth century German Social Democrat, Eduard Bernstein. Arguing that capitalism would evolve peacefully toward socialism, and explicitly repudiating Marx on the inevitability of capitalist decline and the need for revolution, he proclaimed: "The final goal, no matter what it is, is nothing: the movement is everything". Bernstein reduced "socialism" to a series of reforms; the SWP reduces the struggle for revolution to a series of reform struggles. The SWP -- lacking the German Social Democracy's mass base -- adds little to Bernstein but the need for "independent mass mobilisations" ... for the express purpose of pressuring the bourgeois state for democratic reforms.

In her scathing polemic against Bernstein's  
Continued on page seven



Demonstration in defence of Liverpool Women's Health Centre, 1976.

between women's liberation and the class struggle they have felt compelled to attempt a pretence of Leninist orthodoxy. However, the SWP's "socialist perspective" turns out to be an argument for why the women's movement shouldn't have one.

Keig's article dishonestly attempts to falsify the views of Lenin so as to uphold the SWP's supposed Leninism (see "SWP renders Lenin a feminist", *ASP* no 41, April 1977). She attacks the Spartacist League (SL) for calling for a communist women's movement, but she can hardly deny that this perspective was backed by Lenin, nor that, in explicit counterposition to feminism, it was adopted by the Third Congress of the Comintern; so she says nothing about these facts.

Of a piece with the flagrant falsification of Leninism is Keig's "argument" that the SL's call for a communist women's movement is "ultra-left sectarianism": "... nothing but a cover for abstaining from the real struggles of the women's liberation movement". The charge of abstention is patently ludicrous -- our central role in the recent fight around the orientation of this year's International Women's Day march, our active participation in the defence of the Liverpool Women's Health Centre and numerous other struggles in defence of women's rights, all well-known to Keig, easily demonstrate the unseriousness of her charge.

Keig's real objection is that we intervene in every partial struggle *with the revolutionary program*, to link the fight against any one particular manifestation of women's oppressed status to the struggle for workers state power. That is the method of the Trotskyist Transitional Program of the Fourth International. She points to "the mistaken and schematic idea ... that a full program of demands relating to women's needs is going to be taken up *in toto* and at once by large numbers of women". Such an "idea" could not be ascribed to even the most extreme ultra-left Bordigist; yet it serves as a justification for the SWP's practice of *never* raising a "full program" in *any* of its campaigns.

Keig boasts of the SWP's unique ability to "reconcile" Marxism and feminism and castigates the Communist Party of Australia (CPA) as "reformist" and for seeing "women's liberation as somehow *separate* from the 'class struggle'" (emphasis in original). The CPA is indeed reformist and does separate the struggle against women's oppression from the class struggle of

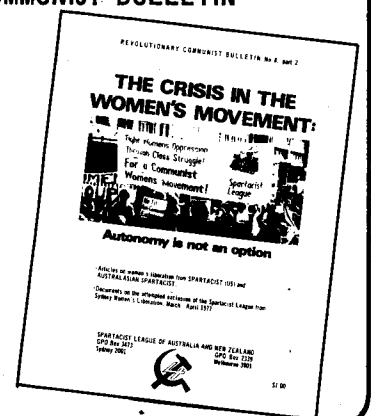
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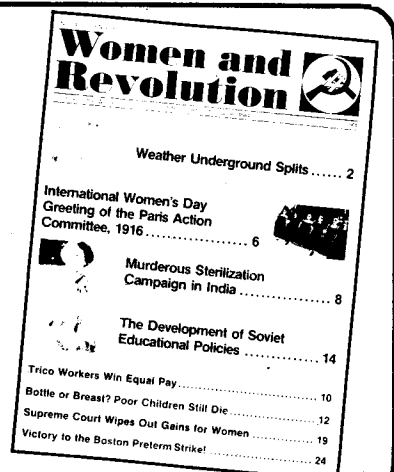
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# Britain . . .

Continued from page one

(presided over by Michael Foot, prominent Labour "left") to review bills proposed by both Liberals and Labour before they are presented in Parliament, and pledges the cabinet ministers to regular consultations with their Liberal counterparts. The agreement also pledges the government to support Liberal proposals for direct elections to the European Economic Community (Common Market) parliament, and to support a Liberal Housing (Homeless Persons) Bill, both relatively unimportant measures. The joint statement specifies that "this arrangement between us should last until the end of the present parliamentary session when both parties would consider whether the experiment has been of sufficient benefit to the country to be continued" (*Guardian*, 24 March).

The most revealing aspect of the whole squalid affair is the lack of serious opposition to the deal from within the ranks of the parliamentary Labour Party. The most that the kept "lefts" of the Tribune group have done is to make a few objections to the deal for the record. As part of their token "protest" some of the Tribunites issued a statement on the agreement with the Liberals which cravenly pledged to "support the Government because of the possible danger of the most reactionary Tory government of this century". They made only a perfunctory effort to cover their left flank by stating that, "we categorically reserve our right to vote against such a deal in whole or in part" (*Tribune*, 25 March).

Having reserved the "right" to oppose the policy of formal cooperation with the Liberals, the "leftists" of the Tribune group are now happy to go ahead and support it. As the bourgeois press has repeatedly pointed out, there is a good reason why most Tribunites actually favoured the arrangement with the Liberals -- it postpones the next general election. Many Tribunites hold marginal seats and given the present pronounced swing away from Labour (recent opinion polls show the Tories leading Labour by 20 percent), an election in the near future would certainly mean a Tory landslide and a scramble among Tribunitary ex-MPs for places in the dole queues. As the London *Times* (20 March) noted in analysing the lack of opposition to the coalition from Labour "lefts": "The prospect of a Thatcher Era, not to mention the loss of his own seat, concentrates the mind of a Tribunitary wonderfully".

Callaghan's deal with Steel has also been met on the whole with the approval of the trade-union bureaucracy. The general secretary of the Trades Union Congress, Len Murray, was quoted in *Socialist Press* (25 March) as saying that he found the "prospect of keeping a Labour government in power a very agreeable thought".

The Liberals, of course, have their own reasons for entering a coalition with Labour at this time. In the event of an early general election and the probable Tory landslide, knowledgeable bourgeois political commentators are predicting that the Liberals would stand to lose up to ten of their present total of 13 seats, thereby obliterating them as an appreciable factor in British politics. Thus the Liberals are happy to assume the role of co-partners in the government and postpone an election, seeking in the longer run a path to permanent, direct involvement in the cabinet.

Labour's pact with the Liberals has been well-received by the bourgeois establishment. When the Lib-Lab deal was announced the *Financial Times* stock index jumped 19 points! A few days before the agreement, the influential *Sunday Times* (20 March) advised the Liberals to "Keep Labour in -- on approval", and opined that "the consequences of a Tory victory now are, frankly, worrying". And the *Economist* (26 March) "tentatively welcomed" Callaghan's deal with the Liberals.

Why is it that every important organ of bourgeois opinion now favours maintaining in office the Callaghan government over an election which would bring the Tories to power? Why do British capitalists and their most intelligent spokesmen prefer a Liberal-Labour coalition to their own traditional party and direct agency of bourgeois rule?

The British working class has powerful economic organizations and a tradition of trade-union militancy and solidarity. The recent long strike of 3,000 Leyland toolmakers against the Social Contract, though broken by bureaucrat Hugh Scanlon, put a scare into the ruling class. They knew that a violently right-wing Tory government would provoke massive industrial action which could explode in a revolutionary confrontation.

As the *Financial Times* (23 March) put it just before the Lib-Lab deal was announced:

"However sceptical one may be about the success of Phase Three [of the Social Contract], it is at least arguable that Labour has a better chance of preventing a wage explosion than a new Conservative Government would have...."

At the present time, only the reformist Labour misleaders have the political authority to force the working class to accept a drastic cut in living standards. The rabidly anti-working-class Thatcher could impose an economic austerity program like Callaghan's only through widespread state repression, inciting fascistic forces such as the National Front and ultimately risking civil war.

Callaghan has been quick to discover another advantage from being the "hostage" of the Liberals (apart from the obvious one of remaining in office). Already he is alibiing the bloc with Steel by explaining that:

"... because we are a minority government then we have to do certain things that wouldn't be done if we were a majority ... there are times when you want to take certain actions that you find difficult to take because you can't construct a majority for it." (quoted in *Tribune*, 25 March)

Unfortunately for Callaghan, the British workers have just experienced two years of majority Labour rule, and they are not liable to quickly forget the "certain actions" (wage freezes, social service cuts, etc) that Callaghan used his parliamentary majority for.

## Ramsay MacDonald's coalition government of 1931

Recently in West Europe there has been a rash of coalitions involving mass social-democratic or Stalinist parties and one or several bourgeois parties. The French Union of the Left; the Italian Communist Party's attempts to "historically compromise" itself with the Christian Democrats; and, the case which most closely parallels the present situation in Britain, the West German coalition government since 1972 of the dominant Social Democracy with the Free Democrats (a small liberal bourgeois party) are all examples of this trend. However, the British working class has traditionally more strongly opposed "coalitionism" than have its continental counterparts. This is largely due to the lingering stench of the "National Government" established in 1931 by Ramsay MacDonald, the former leader of the Labour Party.

MacDonald headed the second Labour government, which was elected in 1929. This cabinet, like Callaghan's, was a minority government and required the support of the Liberals to get any legislation through Parliament. After the 1929 stock market crash, British financiers were threatening the government with the collapse of the entire British banking system, and demanding drastic cuts in public expenditure, particularly unemployment benefits.

MacDonald was unable to get his Labour government to agree to impose such unpopular anti-

working-class measures and instead led 12 (of 254) Labour MPs into a reactionary coalition government with the Liberals and Tories. In the subsequent election the Tories scored tremendous gains, the Liberals' vote declined sharply and Labour only managed to retain 52 seats. The new cabinet, headed by MacDonald, proceeded with its attack on the working class, including such measures as the vicious Means Test to push the mounting numbers of unemployed off the dole.

Callaghan is no doubt hoping that the fading memory of the 1930s, his own fast talking and the unanimous support of the loyal fake-lefts in Parliament will be sufficient to dispel the taint of "MacDonaldism" which attaches itself to this most recent coalition. However, traditional hostility to "the traitor MacDonald" and coalitionism remains strong enough that Callaghan has been compelled to explicitly disavow the historic parallel. Callaghan, Foot [and company] are already busy denying that their deal with the Liberals is a coalition and claiming that it does not represent a denial of the "basic principles" of the Labour Party.

In one sense, of course, Callaghan is right -- for inasmuch as the fundamental "principle" of the Labour brass is class collaborationism, this bloc with the Liberals is only a variation on the same theme which runs straight through the history of their wretchedly reformist, social-democratic party. However, the most class-conscious Labour supporters will see this coalition with the Liberals as a formal repudiation of the Labour Party's traditional claim to stand for the interests of working people against the capitalists.

It is this militant layer to which revolutionaries must address themselves in the coming period, seeking to use Callaghan's open bloc with the Liberals as a lever to separate chunks of Labour's base from the treacherous tops. One important tactic for revolutionaries in doing this is to put forward a policy of conditional non-support to Labour in upcoming elections unless and until they repudiate coalitionism....

## The "Far Left" tails Labour, as always

The response of the self-styled "Trotskyist" "far left" -- the centrists of the [Mandelite] International Marxist Group (IMG), the International Communist League (I-CL) and [ex-Healyite Alan Thornett's group] the Workers Socialist League (WSL) -- has been to combine verbal opposition to the Lib-Lab deal with continuing support to Labour. After going through a ritual denunciation of the crimes of the Labour government, the IMG concludes that "whenever the election takes place *Red Weekly* will call for a vote for Labour" (*Red Weekly*, 24 March). The coalition with the Liberals did not change the IMG's electoral loyalism to Callaghan.

The I-CL, writing before the bloc had been finalised, advised that it would be "better a thousand times that the Labour party should vacate office than that it should depend on Liberal or Ulster Tory votes" (*Workers' Action*, 24 March). The I-CL also advised the Tribune group not to support the government on the Tory no-confidence motion, but could not bring themselves to advise a vote against the Labour Party (in coalition with the Liberals) -- so they counselled abstention. Like the IMG, the I-CL indicates that come what may it will support Labour in any election. Thus in explaining to the Tribunites the difference between not supporting the government in the no-confidence vote and in a general election, the I-CL states that, "To support the Government is not an act of preference: if it were we would say, Labour in, Tories out!"

The Workers Socialist League noted that, "Even when the ignominious pact had been concluded, not a single [Labour] 'left' MP was prepared to come out with decisive condemnation ... with friends like these, workers fighting the government need no enemies" (*Socialist Press*, 25 March). From these essentially correct observations, the WSL somehow concludes that the "lefts", despite their manifest real appetites, "should have demanded and themselves set up a new leadership based on socialist policies". Thus the WSL's at best naive position ("make the lefts fight") logically leads to the same capitulatory conclusion as the IMG and I-CL -- continuing to support the Labour Party (or at least a wing of it).

The response of the Healyites was predictable. Denouncing the Lib-Lab deal as a betrayal, these political bandits called on Labour supporters to "turn out at once to the factories and housing estates [public housing] to build the Workers Revolutionary Party as the alternative to these traitors" (*News Line*, 25 March). And what does this mean concretely? The lead editorial answers: the "Euro-March '77" consisting of youth from eight countries will set off from Dortmund, West Germany, and will link up with no less than four other marches in Britain.

All this marching will culminate in London, where "a giant rally will be held focusing on one question -- the main question; calling for the independent strength of the working class to bring down the Lib-Lab coalition government!"

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CORRECTION

The article in this issue of *ASP* entitled "... losers go on wrecking binge" wrongly quotes Sue Bellamy as saying that the women who voted down Moore's motion to exclude the SL were "voting cattle" who had been "duped" by the SL. In fact, neither Bellamy nor to our knowledge anyone else at the meeting in question used these words. However, those words accurately convey the thrust and tone of Bellamy's remarks about the opponents of the SL's exclusion, and we stand by our article's description of the meeting in question as essentially accurate.

Why wonder how the German Healyites feel about a 500-mile hike to end up simply protesting the Labour Party's parliamentary manoeuvre -- such is life in Healy's "little English" "International". All in all, the Euro-March '77 will be far less politically potent and significant than the historical event it most resembles -- the 14th-century Children's Crusade.

Labour's parliamentary coalition with the Liberals poses the fundamental contradiction between the socialist aspirations of the British working class and the parliamentary character of its party, the Labour Party, in a particularly acute fashion. The various "Trotskyist" groups which inhabit the British left have all once again demonstrated their incapacity to respond to the treacherous social democrats except by sectarian posturing as the mass alternative to the Labour Party on the one hand, or by offering counter-revolutionary bureaucrats their political support on the other. The disorientation and capitulation of the ostensibly revolutionary left in Britain underlines the urgent necessity for the construction of an authentic Trotskyist party in Britain as part of the international Spartacist tendency. ■

(excerpted from *Workers Vanguard* no 152, 8 April)

## Student strikes . . .

Continued from page three

test attacks on the left by Communion and Liberation (a right-wing Catholic youth group) a leader of Lotta Continua, Francesco Lorusso, was deliberately shot and killed by a cop. The murder of Lorusso touched off pitched battles in the streets between leftist students (who were not under the influence of the "Metropolitan Indians") and the cops of a CP-controlled city which is the center of the "red belt" in Italy and has long been held up by the CP as an example of their capacity to "responsibly administer" a major city.

Whereas the political thrust of the students who drove the strike breaking trade-union bureaucrat Lama out of the University of Rome had been unclear, the streetfighting and other confrontations which raged in Bologna for two days clearly represented a left/right polarization. The PCI lined up with the cops as the defenders of capitalist "law and order", threatening, "When armed bands having nothing to do with the student movement devastate, pillage and kill, the duty of the democratic forces of order is prevention and repression" (quoted in *Le Monde*, 15 March).

The PCI was faced on the one hand with the demand by the governing Christian Democracy that it demonstrate its ability to hold the masses in line. On the other hand, significant sectors of the trade unions rejected its categorical identification of the striking students with "fascist provocateurs"; in particular, the metalworkers federation called for discussions with the students. The PCI again felt compelled to side with the bourgeoisie, calling for a massive demonstration on March 12 in Bologna against "violence".

When a contingent of 3,000 students headed by Lotta Continua were denied entrance into the rally site, spokesmen of the Metalworkers union stated, "At this point they deserve to speak". But under the *direct orders* of the Christian Democrats the PCI refused to allow the students, who were chanting "We are Francesco's comrades!", to enter the square or have a speaker. Only when the Lotta Continua delegation forced its way into the square did the PCI back down and offer the students five minutes of speaking time -- provided they agree that when Francesco Lorusso was shot, "the state had applied the principle of self-defense" (quoted in *La Repubblica*, 13-14 March)! Lotta Continua quite correctly refused.

At a subsequent demonstration on March 16 the PCI attempted to justify the murder of Lorusso. Speaking to some 200,000 people (in a city of 480,000) the Communist mayor of Bologna declared, "When the forces of the police suppress violence, they can rest assured that a powerful popular force is on their side. This demonstration proves it" (quoted in *Informations Ouvrieres*, 23 March).

What has been posed so sharply on the streets of Italy is the need for a resolute struggle against the popular front. Even though the Stalinists have yet to officially consummate their "Historic Compromise", the PCI has formed a de facto popular front government and is using its political stranglehold over the Italian proletariat to do the hatchet work of the Christian Democrats. Quite conscious of his role, long-time PCI leader Giorgio Amendola observed at the height of battles in Bologna, "We are in Chile before we have even got into the government" (quoted in *Economist*, 19 March).

Italy today cries out for the intervention of a Trotskyist vanguard party to raise the banner of uncompromising class independence, especially among the restive PCI ranks in the re-emerging

factory councils as well as among the tens of thousands of student strikers who in recent PCI-organized parades sought a bridge to the workers. The crisis of the centrist groups -- who shamefacedly tail after, alternately, the PCI and the popular front and the petty-bourgeois politics of "spontaneous revolt" -- has once again demonstrated the utter bankruptcy of half-way measures. Only a Bolshevik-Leninist party which breaks with support, including electoral support, to class-collaborationist politics can provide a clear pole around which to struggle for the leadership of the militant Italian proletariat.

No to the Malfatti reforms! No to the "Historic Compromise"! Break with the Christian Democrats -- For a general strike against austerity measures! Forward to a Trotskyist party in Italy, section of the international Spartacist tendency! ■

(reprinted from *Young Spartacus* no 53, April 1977)

## SLL enthuses . . .

Continued from page two

Hussein, perpetrator of the 1970 "Black September" massacre of Palestinian guerrillas) as "correct" and "necessary"!

When an SLer observed that the Healyite "solution" to the national conflicts in the Near East amounted to a call for Arab worker to kill Hebrew and Muslim worker to kill Christian for the sake of their respective bourgeois masters, Mulgrew muttered loudly after each mention of the word "kill": "Yes! ... Yes!" This swinish perversion of "Trotskyism" proposes -- from its safe quarters in London and Sydney! -- ridding the working class of its national divisions through more and better pogroms.

And Mulgrew's aberration does indeed extend to London, where his overlord, Gerry Healy, has recently set out to make the WRP the best press agents for the fanatically religious, megalomaniacal dictator of Libya, Colonel Qaddafi. The WRP press has carried glowing reports from "anonymous correspondents" in Libya, where forty political prisoners -- "allegedly Marxists, Trotskyists and members of the Islamic Liberation Party", according to a statement from Amnesty International (quoted in *Direct Action*, 14 April 1977) -- were recently imprisoned for belonging to "illegal political parties", seventeen of them condemned to life imprisonment or death by Qaddafi personally. In his fanatical devotion to Islam, Qaddafi has restored such barbaric laws as cutting off the hands of thieves. Yet the WRP applauds "Gaddafi's ... drive towards people's democracy[!]" and his "uncompromising rejection of Western bourgeois parliamentary democracy in favour of the 'authority of the people'[!]" (*News Line*, 26 February 1977).

Only their cowardice and lack of opportunity prevent Healy, Mulgrew and their gang from carrying out the crimes against the international proletariat which they apologise for and applaud. They and their philistine "Trotskyism" will be swept aside in the course of the struggle of the international Spartacist tendency to reforge a genuinely Trotskyist Fourth International. ■

## Reply to SWP . . .

Continued from page five

revisionism, *Reform or Revolution*, Rosa Luxemburg warned that "if ... social reforms are made an end in themselves, then such activity not only does not lead to the final goal of socialism but moves in a precisely opposite direction". The "autonomous" women's movement -- cut off from the social power of the proletariat -- is a recipe for reformism and a diversion from the struggle to emancipate women. Luxemburg's condemnation of Bernstein applies with equal force today against the SWP and all who sabotage a truly socialist perspective for women's liberation. ■

## correction

In the translation of the "Barcelona Communique" signed by the Spanish LCR reprinted in *ASp* no 40 (March 1977) two words were inadvertently dropped. The section reads (with the omitted words in brackets): "The undersigned parties: ... reaffirm that only the reestablishment of all democratic and national rights, notably that of unrestricted amnesty, would allow advance [toward democracy] in a climate of democratic tolerance". The reader will note that the correction makes the treacherous appeal to the bloody Francoist regime to "democratise" itself even more explicit. ■

## Purge . . .

Continued from page eight

Moore and the CPA; it simply prefers a more "democratic" and subtle approach than outright expulsion. While Moore openly justified her "policing role" against the SL and CPAer Anne Roberts proclaimed herself a "self-appointed custodian" of WLM, SWP speaker Helen Jarvis sagely advised that *there were other ways* to "put an end to" situations where the SL "tends to dominate proceedings with lengthy, repetitive statements".

The SWP hypocritically *abstained* on our first motion though it admits "that Moore's motion in its red-baiting style was anti-communist" (*Direct Action*, 21 April) and Jarvis confessed that we "cannot fairly be accused of disruption". But the SWP did not want to "concede":

"... that it is the 'class struggle politics' of the Spartacist League that is at the basis of the attempt to exclude them and causes them to be singled out. The petition they circulated implies that somehow the Spartacist League members are the genuine communists..."

We are the genuine communists -- but the motion we circulated, despite the SWP's falsifications, mentions neither "class struggle politics" nor does it "imply" that we are the genuine communists. Its endorsement by a wide range of women's liberation activists who are well-known to differ from our views, including members of the International Socialists (who voted for the second motion as well), the Marxist-Feminist Collective, the CPA's ex-Left Tendency, the CL and even several SWPers, gives the lie to the SWP's sectarian excuses.

The anti-working-class views of the prime movers behind the exclusion drive underline its anti-communist character. In an article in *Scarlet Woman* (March 1977), Moore poses the "question" of strikebreaking by male strikers' wives. At a 14 April Sydney University General Philosophy Women's Collective meeting leading CPAer Joyce Stevens argued that strikers' wives and children should participate in strike decisions. Spartacist Phillipa Naughten addressed herself to these "worrying" feminist strikebreakers at the 17 April meeting:

"We have an answer to that question. We're revolutionaries. We're for the unity of the class around victory. We are for unity to organise the women in support of that strike. We don't allow it's a democratic question that the women and children should have a say whether it goes down to defeat or not. If that strike is broken, not only the men will lose their jobs but the women and children will starve. *Men and women workers do have common interests.*"

That is the relationship between Marxism and feminism!

At the following Sunday's general meeting (see article, p 8) the exclusionists unsuccessfully attempted to lock out the SL and then boycotted the meeting to hold their own "autonomous meeting". Their despicable manoeuvre underlined in a flagrant and extreme way the fundamental hostility of feminism to class-struggle politics. Unable to suppress our views through a democratic vote, the frustrated red-baiters resorted to a de facto bureaucratic reversal of the previous week's decision. The exclusion move has been democratically defeated! The struggle for political clarification initiated and relentlessly carried forward by the Spartacist League must continue. If it does, we are certain that those women's liberation activists who remain truly committed to the goal of women's liberation will find their way to the revolutionary politics of the Spartacist League. ■

### OPPOSE EXCLUSIONISM IN MELBOURNE WLM

All women's liberation activists in Melbourne are urged to attend the 7 May general meeting of Melbourne Women's Liberation Movement, which will re-consider the three-year-long exclusion of the SL from Melbourne WLM. The right of the SL, and all opponents of women's oppression, to participate in WLM must be decisively affirmed.

Time: 1.30 pm

Place: Women's Centre  
100 Little Lonsdale Street

### Special Spartacist League discussion on the woman question:

**FEMINISM AND THE WORKING CLASS: Sisterhood or class solidarity?**

Speaker: Marie Hotschilt,  
SL Central Committee

Wednesday, 11 May 1977  
6.30 pm

Sydney University --  
room to be announced.





## Sydney Women's Liberation

# Feminist purge defeated . . .

In what was probably the largest meeting of Sydney Women's Liberation Movement (WLM) ever held, a decisive defeat was dealt to the anti-communist drive to purge the Spartacist League (SL) from WLM. Some 220 women turned out to the specially called meeting on 17 April to consider a motion, initiated by self-styled "Marxist-feminist" Margo Moore and enthusiastically supported by the "Marxist-feminist" Scarlet Woman collective, to exclude the Trotskyist SL "from general meetings of Women's Liberation and from groups and activities initiated from the general meeting". The motion was voted down by the margin of 100 to 88 and represented an undeniable rout for red-baiting "Marxists" and, in particular, for the reformist Communist Party of Australia (CPA), many of whose supporters in WLM actively backed the purge.

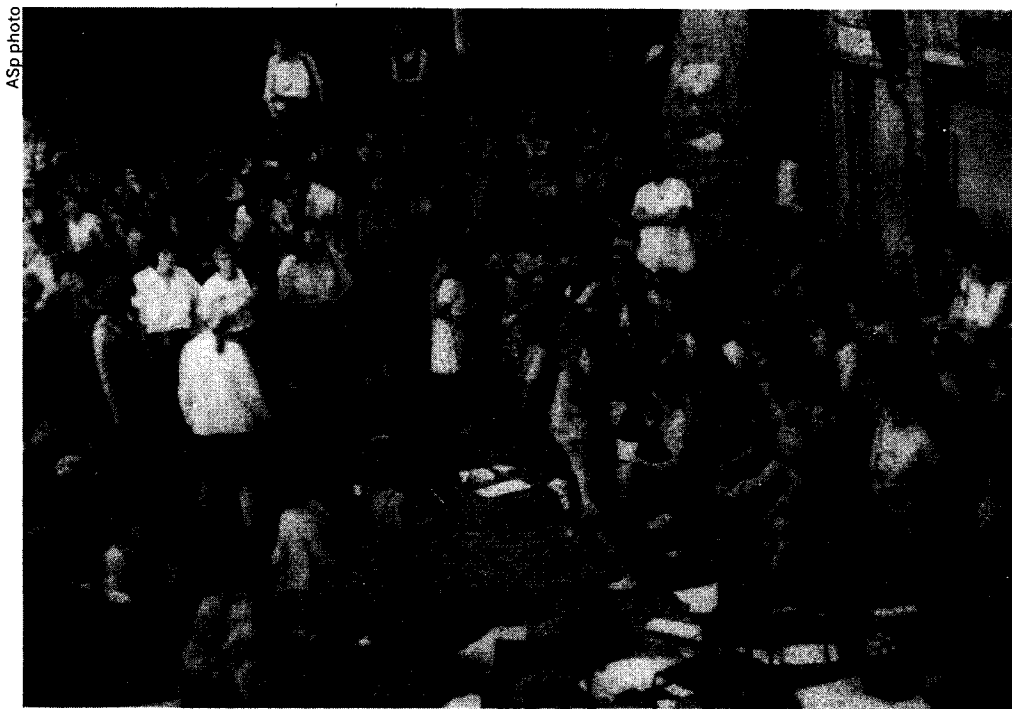
The significance of the purge attempt and the debate generated by it was even admitted by anti-Spartacist anarcho-feminist Wendy Bacon: "I don't think we've had a meeting with such energy of discussion and thought put into it since November 1975". And, in fact, the questions raised by the November 1975 political crisis and the "crisis of confidence" they engendered in the women's movement -- the nature and role of the "autonomous" women's movement and the relationship of feminism to the class struggle -- initiated the dynamic which led to this meeting. The impact of the SL's line in light of the implications of the political crisis, culminating in a victory against feminist politics at the 18 January IWD planning meeting in Sydney which adopted a set of non-feminist united-front demands proposed by the SL, began to pose too much of a threat to the fake-Marxists and "radical" feminists.

Yet though these questions were a central part of the discussion which preceded the meeting, they received inadequate attention in the meeting itself. After the initial presentations by Moore and SL Central Committee member Marie Hotschilt, only thirteen women were allowed to speak from the floor (only one of those a Spartacist supporter). The unendurable haggling over procedural questions and the undisciplined circus atmosphere engendered in part by the "non-hierarchical structure" so cherished by Bacon and her ilk made a serious political discussion difficult. Some anarcho-feminists even opposed having the various motions voted at all.

In addition to Moore's motion, two motions submitted by the SL were voted as well. The first, which had been widely circulated in petition form before the meeting, opposed the exclusion move and characterised it "as undemocratic and anti-communist". The second, submitted in bloc with the Communist League (CL), affirmed that the exclusion "would prevent serious discussion of the view that there can never be a women's movement 'autonomous' or 'independent' from the decisive classes of capitalist society or from the class struggle between them". It emphasised as well that "a most crucial task" facing WLM was to extend and intensify discussion over "the relation of Marxism to feminism".

Though the two SL motions were narrowly defeated -- the vote on the first being 44 to 50, on the second, 60 to 67 -- the meeting strikingly confirmed several points we have made throughout the debate. The slanderous accusations of SL disruption upon which Moore originally motivated her exclusion move were clearly revealed to be simply that -- unsubstantiated slanders. And the sixty votes for the SL/CL motion dramatically demonstrated the falseness of Scarlet Woman's categorical assertion that "WLM is a sufficiently defined [on the basis of support for "autonomy" and feminism] political force to justify its disassociation from the Spartacist League".

Though it played a principled role in blocking with the SL on the need for political clarification, the centrist CL again demonstrated the extent of its own political unclarity. CL leader Linda Boland declared that CLers "do not call themselves feminists" and proceeded to justify



Voting division at 17 April special general meeting of Sydney Women's Liberation which defeated the CPA-supported drive to purge the SL.

the *separate organisation of women*, around the Working Women's Charter Campaign. So as not to affront the feminists by opposing autonomy, without damaging their revolutionary pretensions, the CL deftly concocted *two* definitions of autonomy: one which they support (male exclusionism), another which they don't ("separation of women ... from other forces struggling against capitalism"). The CL would like to keep one foot in the class struggle and the other in the feminist movement.

The reformist Socialist Workers Party (SWP), on the other hand, has both feet firmly planted in the feminist movement. The SWP's vote for continued discussion was belied by a leaflet distributed at the meeting which deplored the fact "that Moore's motion has meant that more time and energy of women's liberation has been diverted to the Spartacist League than they could have hoped for"! The SWP has no less desire to suppress the revolutionary Marxist politics of the SL than do

Continued on page seven

## . . . losers go on wrecking binge

Only one week after a meeting of 220 women voted down a move to expel the Spartacist League (SL) from Sydney Women's Liberation Movement (WLM) a small clique of embittered feminist red-baiters brazenly, forcibly vetoed this democratic decision. When two SL supporters arrived at Women's House for the 24 April WLM general meeting, house collective member Ina Jones barred the entrance. As far as the house collective was concerned, our comrades were not in WLM and would not be allowed in and that was that! Jones was vocally backed up by several other collective members and anarcho-feminist (and perennial Spartacist-baiter) Sue Bellamy.

As members of the Communist League and Socialist Workers Party arrived, they and several independents joined with our comrades in denouncing this flagrant violation of the previous week's decision. The feminists inside the house were clearly hostile to all the women who opposed the attempted purge, but it was only our comrades they were intent on keeping out. When the anti-exclusionist women, the SLers among them, tried to gain entrance to the house they were told they could go and have their general meeting upstairs but the red-baiters would hold a simultaneous meeting in the downstairs lobby. When our comrades and their supporters rejected this obvious wrecking manoeuvre and entered the downstairs meeting, they were beset by a howl of shrieking, chanting, singing and physical threats and eventually forced upstairs.

While some of the wreckers argued that theirs was the

general meeting and others that it was merely an "autonomous" meeting -- closed to Spartacists -- the women forced upstairs clearly constituted the legitimate general meeting in consonance with the previous week's decision. A motion was unanimously passed condemning "The destructive and divisive actions of the house collective ... as undemocratic, anti-communist, and against the interests of the WLM" (though not without the SWP's predictable but unsuccessful attempt to have the phrase "anti-communist" deleted).

The "meeting" downstairs, meanwhile, degenerated into an anti-Spartacist rave session dominated by Bellamy and several other rabid feminists. They spent most of the time trying to discredit the outcome of the exclusion vote. Bellamy slandered the women who voted down Moore's motion as "voting cattle" who had been "duped" by the SL into thinking that what was at question was anti-communism. To prove that anti-communism was not a question for her Bellamy red-baited not only the SL but the SWP as well. Jones chimed in with the argument that the SL had stacked the meeting with students from Sydney University. What a small-minded, cynical, insulting view of their "sisters"! After six weeks of the most intensive debate, verbal and written, in the history of the Sydney women's movement, one hundred women in the movement voted as they did -- according to Jones and her CPA friends -- only because they had been "duped"!

The undisguised contempt these "anti-elitists" reserve for any who threaten their views came through in the

"Statement from the house collective" -- which consists of nine women, including several CPA supporters -- which attempted to justify the bureaucratic coup and was circulated privately several days prior to it. The statement rails against the "anti-feminist pawns of that male group, the Spartacist League" which, they claim, "fights to deny us the right to define ourselves ... as feminists ... women-oriented women, those whose first concern is for their own sex" (emphasis in original). Having defined their "first concern", they bristle at being "told about the importance of the working class. The majority of us, unlike the women from the Spartacist League, ARE working class". The self-righteous workerism of these feminists, who view working-class men as their enemies and all communist women as male "pawns", has about as much in common with working-class politics as does wife-bashing and chauvinist mate-ship amongst backward male workers. The statement concludes with a blackmailing ultimatum: if they don't have their way in excluding the SL "you are all going to be faced with the problem of how to keep the front door open"! This is what the "non-hierarchical" feminists like to call "consensus" politics.

A decision has already been made -- openly debated and democratically arrived at by one of the largest, most representative meetings of Sydney WLM ever. If this hand-ful of wreckers persists in its efforts to autocratically overturn that decision it can lead to only one result: the destruction of Sydney WLM as the vitally necessary open forum for all who stand in the fight against women's oppression.