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THIS ISSUE

This issue is both late and shorter than intended, the main reason for both these omissions has been the changes in the editorial team and the change of editorial address. However, we are confident that from now on the journal will be regular in its publication and carry a wider coverage of articles.

In this present issue we print the second and concluding part of B. Biro's essay on the nature of transitional regimes. We feel that this work is going to provide a great deal of controversial discussion material, and we hope written interventions. For far too long has the 'discussion' taken a stereotyped form, with many people in the Marxist movement being too ready to fall back on analyses and documents written thirty or more years ago. That such documents should be studied and understood there can be no doubt, but that itself is not enough.

The analysis of the Cliff v Healy debate combines well with other material printed in previous issues. Whilst the editors would not agree with all that is in the article, we feel that it does throw some light on certain questions that have a general relevance. On one point in particular we would take issue with the writer of the article, and that is the characterisation of the IS Group as reformist. One can understand the sense in which the term is used in this context, but we feel that economist is a more accurate term. We make this point not to be pedantic; rather we feel that the term reformist may mislead, since many in the IS Group are just as adept at using 'revolutionary' rhetoric as any other Marxists.

The report of the Australian Left Action Conference, although it is a little dated, nonetheless does give a lively picture of some very important developments. Since the article was written there have been large scale strikes against the anti-trade union laws which underline the message of the meeting. Perhaps the most significant aspect of this report is that the Communist Party of Australia convened the conference. This is a move without precedence within the Communist movement.

A VICTORY FOR WHO?

Although this editorial was written some time ago we feel that most of the main points are still valid. Therefore we make no apology for its inclusion/

The recent apparent climb-down by the Government on the issue of anti-trade union legislation was hailed as a victory by many in the labour movement. But the question is who really won? Before going on to deal with that particular issue let us look at the events that led upto the 'confrontation'.

The Government's White Paper projecting anti-trade union legislation signalled another stage in the breakdown of liberal society. The old ideals of a society of free institutions, personal freedom and a state carefully restricted in its powers, have been thrown over-board. Even that last redoubt 'academic freedom' is now under attack, with demands for discipline to be imposed not only on students, but on the staff as well, e.g. L.S.E. Capitalism today is so desperate it cannot afford such luxuries, the seeds of the authoritarian state are being widely sown, by the present Labour Government. The hydraheaded monster, P.I.B., C.I.R., N.E.D.C., I.R.C. etc., has its parallel in every European country, Britain being somewhat behind in this field. Modern capitalism requires ever closer central supervision and coercion in every field if it is to surmount its present crisis of 'regime'. Everywhere the 'strong state' is emerging, it is an inexorable process independent of the good intentions - or otherwise - of the politicians.

It is particularly instructive in Britains' case that the party leading the ruling class in its attack on the workers' organisations is the one, the very one, formed to combat legal restrictions on the trade unions. The Taff Vale judgement in 1901 gave the newly formed Labour Party its biggest impetus. It is even more instructive to see in this present situation the last stand of the Bevanites - Wilson, Crossman, Greenwood, Castle et al. Can anyone seriously doubt that the new generation of Tribunites will similarly betray when they are placed in a position in which they have to take into account 'realities'? This is not to impute some personal failing to them, it is the inevitable result of theoretical pragmatism, and illustrates the real necessity of waging determined struggles against bourgeois ideology, and careful Marxist education which will put into peoples' hands the conceptual tools which will enable them to learn from experience, to comprehend the meaning of their activity and produce a 'realistic' and revolutionary perspective.

Whether or not the proposals in the White Paper were 'mild' or 'unenforceable' is beside the point. The trade union leaders whose 'hysteria' the bourgeois publicists complained of, undoubtedly understood that once the door was opened even slightly it would be ten times more difficult to resist further encroachments by any future Tory Government. The more cynical ruling class organs and spokesmen understood this and the role the present Government is playing. Hence the rage at the deal worked out between the TUC General Council and the Cabinet.

The White paper envisaged the incorporation of the unions into the state machine right down to the shop floor. It had the effrontery to propose that the number of shop stewards elected, whom they should represent, and what

their powers should be in the factory should be the subject of negotiations, between unions and management. This would convert them from being responsible only to their fellow workers into a body whose role and functions would be partly determined by the employers. This employers' dream has already been put forward by the Engineering Employers and rejected out of hand as an impertinence by the unions.

If the White Paper was the main strategy of the ruling class, the conference of the Workers' Control Campaign - attended by over 1000 militants at Sheffield at the end of March - and the strike of May 1st have been the most important ripostes of the working class to date. The conference grasped the absolute necessity to do battle with the Government and almost unanimously supported the May 1st strike. At this conference the lowest level was represented by a paper presented by the Communist Party organiser Bert Ramelson. Although it was an excellent expose of the White Paper, the ideas he put forward were entirely limited to trade union defencism. Anyone would have thought that everything in the garden was lovely before the White Paper reared its ugly head, and all that had to be done was maintain that position.

The fact is that the situation of British capitalism today means that the 'minimum' demand - defend trade union rights - is in the literal sense unrealistic. And the TUC-Cabinet 'compromise' demonstrates this. Most workers are hazily aware that this is so, and that is why they are tending to be swept along by ruling class propoganda about productivity deals and the need for trade union 'reform'. It is not just cunning propoganda that the economy is in a chronic state of crisis, it really is that way. Therefore people know that it is not sufficient to denounce the capitalist solutions, but that there must be a positive alternative. It is the job of Marxists to articulate working class solutions to the problems people face and convince trade unionists that the only alternative is not selling themselves into slavery for a little more cash, but that they have the ability and the right to take their destiny into their own hands. Never was the motto 'That to defend we must attack' more true today.

The May 1st strike, despite the concentrated efforts of the mass media before and afterwards, undoubtedly marked a turning point in post-war history. Many thousands of workers struck over a political issue, The significance of this should not be underrated. Its success in many large industrial centres should give pause for thought to those who are concerned to further the struggle. Taken together the Sheffield Conference and the May 1st strike indicate the very real possibility of a working class counter-offensive. The success - other otherwise - of this grass roots movement will depend to a large extent upon the adoption of an attacking - as opposed to defensive - posture.

The fact that the Wilson Cabinet withdrew the proposed Bill at the last moment was no doubt influenced by that strike. No doubt the TUC General Council used this as a very strong argument in favour of the Bill being dropped. Insofar as the Bill has been dropped this should be regarded as a victory for the working class, for whatever it has done it has made the work of any future Tory Government more difficult. At that level the lesson should be very clear, militancy pays off. But what is the price of this victory? When one examines this aspect of the affair it becomes clear what the Government hoped to do was to substitute 'death by firing

squad' for that by 'hanging'. The role the TUC has assumed under the threat of the Bill is to take over the role of policeman^{to} fight industrial 'anarchy'. That the General Council should do this should come as no surprise, since in the main it is a right-wing body. It is when one looks at the role of the left in^{the} General Council that some hard thinking needs to be done. In their anxiety to ditch the Bill, Jack Jones, Scanlon et al sold the pass. It is little use telling workers that the Bill has been defeated when palpably many of the worst features are to be imposed by the TUC. Having agreed to a 'compromise' on these terms they have prepared the situation for an even more repressive Act in the future. For if they fail to deliver the goods, i.e. reduce the number of strikes, there will be a wave of propaganda unleashed that will make the recent bout of hysteria look like a parish council meeting. And let there be no mistake about it, there seems little chance of a reduction in stoppages while the employers are seeking to screw more out of the workers. This sort of blunder arises from two weaknesses, firstly, as we noted earlier a lack of theoretical clarity, i.e. pragmatism; secondly from a lack of real organised grass roots support, and the one follows from the other.

In the present situation it is clear that to rely upon the trade union left leaders will only lead to further blunders and inevitable defeat. The present situation re-emphasises the need to develop a wide grass roots mobilisation around the demands for workers' control, especially of their own organisations; and in conjunction with this there needs to be developed a new revolutionary leadership of the working class. These two tasks are inseparable. Those who pay lip-service to the idea of workers' control but in practice do nothing to further this campaign will be exposed as dogmatists incapable of developing links with a living movement. And those who subscribe to revolutionary ideas will be dragged to the right if they persist in holding on to outdated alliances. A new working class leadership is not going to be built overnight, nor will it be able to be parachuted into position from 'red bases' ensconced in universities. But in the coming twelve months there could be laid the basis for such a leadership, if principles are adhered to now, and real struggles are initiated.

WORKERS' STATES? - PROBLEMS OF TRANSITION: PART 11.

by B.Biro

1V

We have cast doubt on the assertion that the U.S.S.R. requires a merely political revolution to effect the transition to socialism. We have stressed that a dialectical appreciation of the revolutionary process understands it as one which includes phases of ebb, and ossification into transitional forms permeated by contradiction at all levels, which forms become fetters needing to be overthrown by a new revolutionary upsurges. We have rejected the official ideology which attempts to conceal the alienation of the state from the proletariat - its transformation into a bureaucratic hierarchy of a terrifying impersonality worthy of Kafka himself.

The more difficult task is now to proceed to a concrete analysis of Soviet social structure. (By the way, throughout this essay I refer to the U.S.S.R. rather than to the 'Workers' States' as a whole, because there are great differences between them which would enormously complicate the analysis. Discussion of the oldest, most structured, and probably most degenerated, of these transitional forms seems the best starting point. Inevitably the different circumstances of formation of the others has provided resultant structures needing different analysis.)

The key question is the social status of the bureaucracy vis-a-vis the workers which, for Marxists, has to be ascertained by a study of the mode of production.

As previously mentioned, the Stalinist bureaucracy appears to have a preponderant role in social life beyond anything previously experienced in history. This is what makes facile comparisons between it and previous statist formations located within class systems so misleading. The Stalinist bureaucracy has not only state power but all power in its hands. As Trotsky noted, the class in whose name it rules is utterly without any means whatever of exerting hegemony over this formation that has separated itself from the class and opposed itself to it. Indeed some commentators have gone so far as to say that, following the liquidation of the old proletariat (itself a tiny minority in Russian society) in the Civil War and the gradual displacement, and final liquidation, of their representatives, the Bolsheviks, the Stalinist bureaucracy created and moulded the expanding proletariat that is supposed to furnish its basis.

It is worth repeating again the other important point made by Trotsky - "...the very fact of its appropriation of political power in a country where the principal means of production are in the hands of the state, creates a new and hitherto unknown relation between the bureaucracy and the rules of the nation." (12)

Trotsky characterises this new and hitherto unknown relation as one of a gigantic parasitism. However this metaphor strikes me as giving rather a too passive a picture, and one too oriented towards distribution. This metaphor implies that attached to an otherwise whole and healthy body is a separate organism exacting tribute. However it is clear that there is no such distinct separation to be made in Soviet society. The bureaucracy is as much constitutive of the body of Soviet society as is the working class. It does

not simply levy a toll on the produce of the economy - it organises production itself, it alone projects the course of the economy. Of course there are sectors of the bureaucracy solely employed on non-economic functions necessary for the general rule of the stratum (army and political police, including thought police) and this represents an enormous waste of resources surpassing capitalist advertising budget wastes. Nevertheless it is incontestable that the bureaucracy does not simply exact tribute with the mailed fist, but has a basis in production itself right down to factory level. The mode of production itself is bureaucratic.

In this connection it is interesting to look at what Marx has to say about the managerial stratum -

"The labour of superintendence and management will naturally be required whenever the direct process of production assumes the form of a combined social process, and does not rest on the isolated labour of independent producers. It has, however, a twofold character.

On the one hand, all work in which many individuals cooperate necessarily requires for the coordination and unity of the process a directing will, and functions which are not concerned with fragmentary operations but with the total activity of the workshop, similar to those of the conductor of an orchestra. This is a kind of productive labour that must be performed in every mode of cooperative production.

On the other hand, this labour of superintendence necessarily arises in all modes of production which are based on the antagonism between the worker as a direct producer and the owner of the means of production. The greater this antagonism the more important is the role played by superintendence. Hence it reaches its maximum in a slave **system**. But it is indispensable also under the capitalist mode of production, since the process of production is at the same time the process by which the capitalist consumes the labour power of the worker. In the same way, in despotic states, the labour of superintendence and universal interference by the government comprises both the discharge of community affairs, the need for which arises in all societies, and the specific functions arising from the antagonism between the government and the mass of the people."

(13)

This dual function is also apparent in the case of the Soviet bureaucracy. Some of its functions and functionaries are concerned with organising production, others with keeping the workers subjugated. Only here this is not done in the interests of a third group - the rentiers - but, via the mediation of state property, simply in the interests of defending the material privileges of the bureaucracy itself.

This direct organisation of production by the bureaucratic stratum as an independent power, serving no class but itself, represents a new historical situation.

The only sound point in Tony Cliff's book Russia : A Marxist Analysis is that with a nationalised economy the distinction between the political and the social revolution is put into question. Of course he gives away more than he realises here, since if this is the case in the U.S.S.R. then it must have undergone a profound transformation which makes it absurd to classify it as

capitalist because, I take it Cliff accepts, in the latter system the distinction can be made.

Postponing the precise way in which such a distinction might be made (I suspect there is no absolute distinction), there seems to me no question but that, because of the role the bureaucracy plays in the 'base', production itself, its fettering of the most important productive forces, it represents a social layer related to production in a definitive way (i.e. control), and one which is opposed to the working class - which latter naturally has an interest in controlling production for its own benefit.

Before leaving Cliff completely, a digression on a common criticism of his position might be useful. The state-capitalist theory is said by orthodox Trotskyists to involve "running the reel of reformism backwards". This means that, just as the reformists envisage the peaceful growing over of capitalism into socialism, so the theory of state-capitalism seems to be unable to date the counter-revolution which replaced the conquests of the proletarian revolution with a form of capitalism again, so they must therefore believe in the peaceful transition from socialism to capitalism - hence "reformism backwards". The date 1928 has been mentioned, but this is so obviously arbitrary that I will spend no time on it. Also it has been pointed out that the Stalinist bureaucracy climbed to power over the bodies of the Left Opposition (though let us not forget the Right Opposition, and the Kulaks and middle peasants) so that it was hardly a peaceful process. Nevertheless the important point is that it was a process. What seems to have been lacking is that grand historical hiatus which characterises the classic revolution or counter-revolution, the confrontation of distinct social forces, the moment when everything seems in the balance. One thinks for example of the Communards desperately defending the gates of Paris against Thiers' army. The parallel here would have been if the White armies had stormed revolutionary Petrograd. But they didn't. Moreover the "counter-revolutionaries" were already inside the gates! Their leader was soon to sit in the General Secretary's chair of the Communist Party! So the "counter-revolution" thesis would seem to run the reel of reformism backwards.

But is this a conclusive argument? What are the considerations which lead revolutionaries to reject the reformist strategy? Do these considerations apply with equal force to the reverse movement?

Crudely put, we reject reformism because no ruling class can be expected to give up without a fight; because the institutions mediating the ruling-class are not neutral ground, especially the state machine; and because the general ideological, political and economic hegemony of the ruling class can only be overthrown by basing the movement on its own social forces, organisations, and institutional forms. History has confirmed this analysis of the impossibility of reformism over and over again. In every case reformist end up defending capitalism against the attacks of the working class (e.g. the P.C.F in France in 1968), or in extreme cases go over to the other side and lead the capitalist class in its attacks on the workers' positions (as the Wilson-Castle gang is at present).

Now it does seem plausible to argue that the above considerations do not carry so much weight in the case where a revolutionary overturn has only just occurred, so that the hegemony - ideological and institutional - of the new power is relatively precariously established and the mass upsurge has

exhausted itself and begun its long ebb. It is not inconceivable that old ideas with much historical weight, only recently overlaid by new ones, can rapidly re-establish themselves, that deserters from the former ruling class cross the lines again, that the recently defeated classes, with their cultural and other resources, recuperate quickly, lift their heads and, finding the revolutionary body politic exhausted and disheartened, begin to take the opportunities open to them, even capturing strong-points in the revolutionary institutions themselves. It is often said that there are some situations of social crisis in which the oppressed masses and their leaders have power in their hands if they only had the confidence to grasp it. May it not be conceivable that, even after ostensibly grasping power, the magnitude of the task appears so great; the resources, moral and material, so scarce; that confidence falters, the masses and their leaders lose their nerve? The rapidly recuperating oppressors, become bolder, then perhaps push forward, re-establish their hegemony, wisely integrating into it the numerous existing cadres, demoralised and place-hunting, willing to come over?

It does not seem to me such a picture can be ruled out a priori. However I do not think it gives the key to what happened in the post-October developments. True the exhaustion did produce a social and political vacuum. But it does not seem to have been filled by the former capitalist or feudal elements, though if allowed to proceed unchecked the N.E.P. may have led to it. The negation of the revolution was not one which returned affairs to the status quo ante, but one which was brought forth by, was internal to, the revolution itself. Just as in developing its power and strength the bourgeoisie produced its own gravediggers, the revolutionary proletariat, so the proletariat produced its own butchers who would strangle revolution and build a society in their image rather than the proletariat's. However because this negation developed within the movement itself, on the basis of the new conditions and structures, it could not be simply a reinstallation of the former regime.

Once again a movement in the name of humanity has negated conditions which were the negation of humanity. But, once again, instead of this negation of the negation growing over into the self-sustaining positive[✖], free of contradiction, it has developed its own contradictions, and established a new negation of humanity in the shape of the repressive bureaucratic machine.

But that this system, permeated as it may be by contradiction, is different from capitalism can only be denied by those who have no dialectical sense and simply lump together all conditions that are formally opposed to

✖ "...atheism is the negation of God and seeks to establish by this negation the existence of man. Socialism no longer requires such a roundabout method ...It is positive human self-consciousness no longer...attained through the negation of religion; just as the real life of man is positive and no longer attained through the negation of private property, through communism. Communism is the phase of negation of the negation...the necessary form and the dynamic principle of the immediate future, but communism is not itself the goal of human development." (Marx 1844 E.P.Mss.)

truly human ones, as indifferently hostile, thus in effect eliminating history as a form of knowledge and going back to utopianism.

V

A difficult problem now faces us of locating the new contradictions in the hierarchy of the dialectic. Is the contradiction between the bureaucratic stratum and the workers on the same level as that between capitalists and proletarians? Or is it a subordinate contradiction soon to disappear as part of a general working out of the proletarian revolution?

But before this I must expand on my thesis that the degeneration cannot be simply dismissed as capitalist restoration. What the ultra-left critics simply refuse to recognise is the origin of authoritarian strata in the workers' own organisations - they simply spirit in a state-capitalist class from nowhere, without explaining its origins. It is useless to point to the old Czarist officers, the working class can and did provide plenty of its own bureaucrats. It is not accidental that the same ultra-lefts that view the Soviet bureaucrats as a state-capitalist class, generally see in the T.U. bureaucrats in the West nothing but capitalist lackeys, without locating their specific role in the fact that they have to depend also on a working class basis. Conceiving of the proletariat in an essentially idealist way as the bearers of simon-pure socialist values, they persistently duck the problem of bureaucratisation which must be understood as a problem internal to the workers' movement.

It was relatively easy to duck the problem in the analysis of the pre-revolutionary period by seeing bureaucratic formations, even including the labour bureaucracy, simply as servants of capital. Thus, denying that there is here any authentic problem in its own right, this crude approach in the case of Russia results in either denying there is a problem (i.e. idealist whitewashing of the bureaucracy) or saying that since bureaucracy was an epiphenomenon of capital before, so it must be now, ergo capitalism still exists! Even formal logicians should be able to spot the error here.

Although taking state-power enormously facilitates the opportunities for bureaucracy, the germ of this development can easily be seen in existing proletarian organisations. The most well-documented study of this that has appeared is Robert Michels Political Parties written before the first world war and based mainly on a study of continental social-democratic parties, which provided the empirical basis for his well-known 'iron law of oligarchy.'

Michels argues that in trying to overthrow authoritarian structures the masses are forced to organise themselves and hence to produce a bureaucracy which very soon takes advantage of its position to pass beyond the control of rank and file and develop conservative interests.

"Inspired with a foolish selfsatisfaction, the ex-worker is apt to take pleasure in his new environment, and he tends to become indifferent and even hostile to all progressive aspirations in the democratic sense. He accommodates himself to the existing order, and ultimately, weary of the struggle, becomes even reconciled to that order. What interest for them now has the dogma of social revolution? Their own social revolution has already been effected. At bottom, all the thoughts of these leaders are concentrated upon the single hope that

there shall long continue to exist the proletariat to choose them as delegates and to provide them with a livelihood." (14)

Furthermore in order to answer those who assert that the turn towards conservatism in proletarian parties is due to their becoming infected by petty-bourgeois recruits, Michels devotes space to proving conclusively that the most conservative and reactionary bureaucrats were of proletarian origin. He sums up his position as follows:

"It is organisation which gives birth to the dominion of the elected over the electors, of the mandataries over the mandators, of the delegates over the delegators. Who says organisation says oligarchy." (15)

Michels does not clearly distinguish between three different theses, though he asserts them all. (a) The bureaucracy developed in workers' organisations becomes conservative and joins the existing establishment. (b) The workers displace the existing establishment but in doing so adapt themselves to existing structures so that a change of personnel is effected but the structures remain. (c) The workers organisations break up existing structures but inevitably the new structures provide yet another form of oligarchy.

He does not clearly distinguish these because, although he counts himself an historical materialist, his conceptual apparatus is very crude, more or less exhausted by the categories oligarchy/democracy. Thus his final paragraph embodies a circular model of history.

"The democratic currents of history resemble successive waves. They break ever on the same shoal. They are ever renewed. This enduring spectacle is simultaneously encouraging and depressing. When democracies have gained a certain stage of development, they undergo a gradual transformation, adopting the aristocratic spirit, and in many cases also the aristocratic forms, against which at the outset they struggled so fiercely. Now new accusers arise to denounce the traitors; after an era of glorious combats and inglorious power, they end by fusing with the old dominant class; whereupon once more they are in their turn attacked by fresh opponents who appeal to the name of democracy. It is probable that this cruel game will continue without end." (16)

In a direct reference to Marx he denies the possibility of classless society and we will return to this later.

Returning to the question of the origin of the Stalinist bureaucracy let us note an underemphasised point in Marxist theory of revolution. This is that the model of proletarian revolution differs significantly from that of former revolutions. This can be obscured in such dichotomous models of class struggle as is given in the opening passage in the Manifesto.

"The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles.
Freeman and slave, patrician and plebian, lord and serf, guildmaster and journeyman, in a word oppressor and oppressed, stood in constant opposition to one another, carried on an uninterrupted, now hidden, now open fight, a fight that each time ended, either in a revolutionary reconstitution of society at large, or in the common ruin of the contending classes."

What is immediately obvious here is that society was never reconstituted under the leadership of the subordinate partner of these pairs. To take the destruction of feudalism for example. This was accomplished under the leadership of the bourgeoisie - itself an oppressing class - not the serfs who were directly exploited by the lords. It is of course true that the nobility seemed to concentrate in itself all the evils of society and that the bourgeoisie was restricted in its development by it, and had various grumbles about taxation etc. Thus the revolt against feudal arbitrariness was carried out under the banner of a universal emancipation rather than of undisguised bourgeois interests. Nevertheless it is obvious that the underlying reality was the displacement of one oppressing class by another already existing one. The bourgeoisie had been able to develop up to a point its own mode of production, and on this economic basis develop its own class power, financial, political and, above all, ideological, before taking on the existing order in a more or less sharp period of confrontation. The bourgeoisie in fact were the social owners of new productive forces. Instead of a simple contradiction of forces of production and relations of production, we have a complex insertion in a decomposing mode of production (i.e. both forces and relations) of a subordinate mode of production (i.e. both forces and relations) gathering strength, like a grub in an apple.

The case of proletarian revolution is strikingly different. If it was analogous one would project a gradual increase in the weight of the co-ops in the economy etc., but though Marx sometimes cites the co-ops as evidence that capitalists are not needed, he does not base his perspective on them, as is well known.

Whereas the bourgeoisie strove for power with tangible evidence in their hands of their own capacities, power, and potential superiority over the traditional mode of production, the proletariat has to challenge the existing mode of production from within, and go, more or less, from nothing to everything. Indeed it is precisely because they have "nothing to lose" i.e. no existing privileges, that Marx is confident that they must institute a classless society without exploitation.

If the 'handmill gives you the feudal lord, the steam-mill the industrial capitalist' what new productive force does the proletariat control and base its thrust for power on? At first sight, because of the location of the proletariat in the existing mode of production, it does not seem possible that the proletariat could claim any productive forces at all, never mind new and superior ones, since by definition the capitalists own them all. However, there is one extremely important productive force that is not the capitalist's until the proletariat sells it to him - labour. The productive force that is destined to make socialism superior to capitalism is that of a superior organisation of labour. Also only socialism based on this is capable of taking the development of techniques to their limit, so that eventually labour as such disappears and the economy rests simply on the application of science and knowledge, socially acquired and applied.*

*"To the degree that large-scale industry develops, the creation of real wealth comes to depend less on labour-time, and on the quantity of labour expended, and more on the power of the instruments which are set in motion

The problem from the point of view of the proletariat is that this superior organisation of labour is only potentially theirs. They know that everything stops when they withdraw their labour but they don't themselves control their labour - they can only be productively active by alienating it to the capitalist. Given this, one can understand the extreme difficulty of raising to social hegemony a class which economically, politically, and ideologically, is almost a nullity. This is the underlying reason for the otherwise surprising phenomena noted by Lenin of the need to bring revolutionary leadership 'from outside' the class.

"We have said that there could not yet be Social-Democratic consciousness among the workers. It could only be brought to them from without. The history of all countries shows that the working class, exclusively by its own effort, is able to develop only Trade Union consciousness i.e. the conviction that it is necessary to combine in unions, fight the employers and strive to compel the Government to pass necessary labour legislation etc. The theory of socialism, however, grew out of the philosophical, historical, and economic theories that were elaborated by educated representatives of the propertied classes, the intellectuals.

In the very same way in Russia, the theoretical doctrine of Social Democracy arose quite independently of the spontaneous growth of the working class movement, it arose as a natural and inevitable outcome of the development of ideas among the revolutionary socialist intelligentsia." (18)

(It is necessary to distinguish carefully this point about the origin of Marxist theory from the question of the class composition of the vanguard party. As a matter of fact this insight of Lenin's was not isolated. Michels quotes several writers of the 1890's on the essential role played by leaders of bourgeois origin - although he appears not to have heard of Lenin.)

At this point some may put forward a much more radical revision. If the superiority of socialism over capitalism is supposed to be based on a superior organisation and ability to apply science and technology - may this not imply that the bearers of the new productive forces inside capitalist society are not the proletarians at all but the managers, technocrats, and scientists? Hence the thesis of 'managerial revolution' and a new class society based on a 'bureaucratic collectivist' mode of production. Variants of this thesis identify fascism and Stalinism; consider the mode progressive

during labour-time, and whose powerful effectiveness...depends...on the general state of science and the progress of technology...With this transformation, the cornerstone of production and wealth is neither the labour which man directly expends, nor the time he spends at work, but rather the appropriation of his own collective productive power, his understanding of nature and his mastery over nature, exercised by him as a social body - in short it is the development of the social individual...As soon as labour in its direct form has ceased to be the great well spring of wealth, labour-time...must cease to be its measure...With that the system of production based on exchange-value collapses..." (17)

only for the backward countries unable to develop in the imperialist nexus; or simply condemn it as historically retrogressive - though on what criteria is not clear.

Certainly such a regime would be a million miles away from the appropriation of society's "collective productive power" envisaged by Marx because ex hypothesi most people would be reduced to carrying out the orders of the technocrats. This means that their initiative^{and} creativity would be wasted and their exclusion from power would in fact result in gross inefficiency.

The main problem with the thesis of managerial revolution is that it has not happened. The existing managerial strata seem content to follow the programme of 'modernising capitalism' and are certainly not flocking in great numbers to lead the revolutionary circles of the proletariat in a 'hegemonic bloc'! (Of course, some of them, e.g. scientists and lower technical and office strata have nothing to fear from anti-capitalist revolution.) Equally there is no evidence that in any of the genuine revolutions e.g. Russian, Chinese, this stratum as a whole was very much involved as a leading and independent force.

One problem in picking this stratum as the leaders of revolution, bearers of a new mode of production, and as a new ruling class, is that Marxism does not seem to be a very good choice to use as an ideology. One would have expected something akin to St. Simonism or Fabianism.

These considerations lead one to the conclusion that even the sharp social inequalities and antagonism between the bureaucracy and the workers must still be understood as the result of a process of internal differentiation going on within the institutions established by the proletariat. In order to establish their legitimacy the new layers haveⁱⁿ some way to found it on the form of consciousness associated with those institutions i.e. Marxism. Thus the ideology of the bureaucracy is parasitic on Marxism. Thus while the main area of distortion is their account of State and Party they cannot take this to its limit because everyone knows about the 'withering away of the state'. They have to admit therefore that their own rule is exceptional and temporary. This makes them peculiarly unconfident for a ruling class heralding a new epoch distinct from socialism. It also means that it is much easier for the proletariat to find its intellectual weapons in official doctrine than when it is under the ideological hegemony of the bourgeoisie. Like the structures the ideology is a transitional one (substitution of 'the' party for the class; socialism is one country etc.) which attempts to justify the ossified deformation of the revolution. (There is plenty of scope for an extensive analysis of the relation of the ideological distortions of Marxism to the precise nature of the transitional regime).

VI

In dealing with the question of whether or not the bureaucratic layer should be termed a class we are in a bit of a quandary because it is not entirely clear how a class is defined. Does any group with special interests constitute a class? Or is property essential? Both Michels and Trotsky seem to think inheritance is important. Thus Michels argues against Marx as follows:

"...social wealth cannot be satisfactorily administered in any other manner than by the creation of an extensive bureaucracy. In this way we are led by an inevitable logic to the flat denial of the possibility of a state without classes. The administration of an immeasurably large capital, above all when this capital is collective property, confers upon the administrator influence at least equal to that possessed by the private owner of capital. Consequently the critics in advance of the Marxist social order ask whether the instinct which today leads the members of the possessing classes to transmit to their children the wealth which they (the parents) have amassed, will not exist also in the administration of the public wealth of the socialist state, and whether these administrators will utilise their immense influence in order to secure for their children the succession to the offices which they themselves hold." (20)

Trotsky argues that the bureaucracy is not a class because "The individual bureaucrat cannot transmit to his heirs his rights in the exploitation of the state apparatus." (21)

Certainly Michels' predictions seem to have been refuted by experience. In the USSR the nepotism that undoubtedly exists has not reached the point that on the death of an official his heir is judged to have the right to that position. Rather this event will tend to signal a downturn in the sons' fortunes, now he has lost his protector.

However as against Trotsky's position, it has been argued that the clerical estate formed part of the exploitative class in feudalism in virtue of their relation to the serfs on the Church lands, independently of the fact that recruitment to the hierarchy was not hereditary. The point here is that the serf is tied to the land and only through this to the landowner. It is a matter of indifference to him whether the owner is a person or an institution. (Incidentally I once read in Readers Digest that Russian agriculture is State Feudalist!)

Marx laid great stress on the freeing of the serfs from the land as a precondition of capitalism. It made their labour available for exploitation while also putting them under the necessity to sell it - though nominally they were free agents.

The basic problem in defining class in such a way as to include all the ruling classes in history is that the different systems under review vary enormously in the way the domination of the so-called 'ruling class' is mediated. In this sense the concept does not appear to work as a supra-historical static concept but is a way of referring to a phenomenon which itself has an historical development. As productive systems change so do the possible mechanisms of domination. As you move from feudalism to post-capitalist societies the more accidental does the relationship between your person and your social position appear. In feudalism it is in your blood and birthplace. Membership of the nobility can hardly be separated from the individuality of its bearer. He just is a nobleman. In capitalism, although we have an hierarchical society, the relationship is less rigid. 'Personal freedom' exists - by which is meant the possibility of finding your own class position. To be sure property determines this - but it is possible to gain - or to lose - property. However the rigidities of property

inheritance limit this considerably and place enormous obstacles in the way of someone born into a lower class being able to change his class.

In the case of the Soviet Union we have a hierarchy of administrative or political function. Here the personal and the social function have become almost completely detached. People can gain or lose positions at the stroke of a pen.

From another point of view capitalism appears as the extreme term; from original community we have been splintered into atomic individuals. Post-capitalist regimes recognise the social character of production and thus represent a partial return of man to himself. However this occurs in a paradoxical way because, as previously noted (Pt. III), the social is still alienated from the individual. The institutions of the collectivity are a happy-hunting ground for careerists in search of power and privilege.

The possibility of basing dominance on an all-pervasive state administration appears in previous societies only as a hidden potentiality. It could be argued that just as it was possible for the masses to do the dirty work for the bourgeoisie so it was possible for them to do it for the bureaucracy. The emancipation of society from the common enemy, feudalism, brought out into the light of day other inequalities. Just so in Russia. Hidden antagonisms became open. In previous systems commodity markets were fringe phenomena apparently not basic to the social relations defined by slavery and serfdom. So previously the state functionary and his interests were seen as subordinated to other classes based on associated modes of production (in spite of state organisation of certain branches of production, munitions, Bismarck's railways, modern nationalisations) but suddenly the bureaucratic function is able to move in and take the centre of the stage when the collectivisation of property destroys the power of those it formerly served. Just as the irrational feudal restrictions on labour (i.e. guilds, serfdom) and on money (usury) condemned the merchant to a marginal role, until breakdown and the introduction of reasonable property law gave him and his capital the chance to flower, so the manager, technocrat, or bureaucrat, has to put up with the irrationalities of private property, its deadwood in the boardroom, its inability to be satisfactorily co-ordinated by the state, until when rational planning emerges, the bureaucratic function now appears as the only centre of power and the bureaucrat is unhampered by any other allegiance than to his own interest.

(Notice I refer to the capture of by the "bureaucratic function", not the bureaucracy. This is meant to correspond to the point previously made that, by and large, the capitalist bureaucracy, in spite of certain conflicts of interest with the property owners, remains under the hegemony of the bourgeoisie. Also there is considerable mutual recruitment from one layer to the other - managers acquire shares, wealthy men go in for politics etc. It is not the old bureaucracy that takes power so much as the men exercising bureaucratic functions that emerge from the differentiation taking place in the new regime.)

Incidentally great play is made by the orthodox about the way in which the bureaucracy "guards" the collective property against counterrevolution. However it does not necessarily follow that it exercises the 'dictatorship of the proletariat'. After all the bourgeois state "guarded" freedoms

against the ambitions of the monarchy but this does not mean it represented anybody but the bourgeoisie and it was quite possible to have another class oppressed even while they assisted Cromwell cut off a King's head.

The truth is the bureaucracy exercises its dictatorship in its own interest. It is conservative and thus comes continually into collision with the proletarian forces, but also, in the main, wishes to protect "its" state and economy against out and out capitalist forces.

This section has been somewhat tentative, but I owe it to the reader to try and produce a firm position which I will now do in the conclusion.

VII

The root cause of the consolidation of a bureaucratic stratum in the Soviet state and economy is undoubtedly the low level of productive forces in the country. From the point of view of world revolution this kind of intermediary formation in a particular country is not surprising when one considers its long period of isolation before the process as a whole got under way again. Nevertheless even after the overthrow of capitalism on a world scale the problem will still exist because it is, at bottom, internal to the nature of postrevolutionary society and its struggle to move towards abundance. Michels' 'Iron law of oligarchy' remains a permanent danger, though one which becomes less acute as the material basis of society improves, thus allowing the masses to express more of their energy in controlling the direction of social life, and as they learn from experience of the danger.

The further development of the productive forces in the Soviet Union will bring present contradictions (economic political cultural etc.) to a head, and the future history of the U.S.S.R. and the establishment of socialism on a world scale will continue to develop on the basis of the working out of further contradictions.

The contradiction as far as the sphere of production is concerned is that between the productive force represented by the initiative of the workers and the command structure into which they are integrated and which stifles this force. The contradiction between social forces is that between those who relate to the means of production as controllers and those who relate to it as its slaves. Associated with this are conspicuous differentials in income.

Given that, in spite of its primitive character and infection by bourgeois norms of distribution, consumerist ideology, etc., the U.S.S.R. is a crucial step beyond capitalism, it is still worth defending. Just as Marx said the proletariat could block with the bourgeoisie in the overthrow of feudalism, but must maintain its own organisation to fight its future enemies, so today capitalism is the main enemy, but we must be preparing to smash the existing bureaucracies (not least in order to fight capitalism more effectively) and fight the seeds of authoritarianism already evident in the workers organisations.

The bureaucracy (particularly once in power in society) is a social layer developed on the basis of functional differentiations in the workers organisations and post-revolutionary institutions, which soon develops interest of its own, becoming a conservative force strangling further revolutionary

development. However, precisely because of its origin in the process of proletarian revolution itself the distinction between the proletariat and the bureaucracy is more ill defined and variable than is the sharp distinction between capitalist property owners and the proletariat. This means that the 'space' between capitalism and pure socialism, can be filled by an almost infinite variety of transitional forms, in assessing which more than one dimension has to be taken into account - inequalities in income, distribution of power, even ideological criteria which may help to determine the direction of change etc. I have concentrated on the U.S.S.R. as an extreme case. Yugoslavia, China, Cuba, Czechoslovakia, provide more complex, less severe cases, in which one should by no means assume homogeneity in the bureaucracy. There is the political bureaucracy, the technocratic, even sections still in contact with the masses that might well come over if the latter launch a struggle.

Broadly these transitional regimes are ones in which proletarian power has been deformed and overlaid by bureaucratic power; in which the programme of socialist revolution remains in the consciousness of the toilers, if in a distorted way, (so that the bureaucracy has to legitimate itself in these terms); in which more or less acute contradictions at all levels exist.

The order of the day is - overthrow the bureaucracy and establish workers' power.

The 'programme of political revolution' is not a rich enough concept to do justice to this (even to sum what Trotsky himself said.) Instead we should understand our programme (and develop it) as one for a new upsurge of proletarian revolution. Permanent proletarian revolution must continue throughout the pre-socialist epoch. Its meaning will vary according to the precise nature of the fetters requiring to be overcome at each time and place. There is no general formula. It depends upon what is possible and where the contradictions are manifesting themselves, which demands revolutionaries will advance.

However the aim should always be to maximise the opportunities for the creative energy of the masses to express itself as far as possible. Communism, the fullest expression of human power and freedom, is not a state of affairs to be presented on a plate, it grows throughout history by the continual overcoming of obstacles, through the struggle of the masses. Marx has already replied to those who talk of the benignity of certain leaderships, or the possibility of reform from on top.

"For the production of this communist consciousness on a mass scale and for the success of the cause itself, the alteration of men on a mass scale is necessary, an alteration which can only take place in a practical movement, in a revolution. This revolution is necessary, therefore, not only because the ruling class cannot be overthrown in any other way but also because the class overthrowing it can only in a revolution succeed in ridding itself of the muck of ages and become capable of establishing society anew." (22)

Notes

- (1) L.Trotsky : Revolution Betrayed pp 138-139
- (2) W.Leonhard : Child of the Revolution p377
- (3) Marx : Poverty of Philosophy p147
- (4) Rakovsky : The Professional Dangers of Power BMS No.3
- (5) Revolution Betrayed p237
- (6) ibid pp248-249
- (7) Marx : Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844 p99
- (8) ibid 100
- (9) ibid 104
- (10) ibid 72
- (11) Marx : Capital Vol.1 Ch.XIV;4
- (12) Revolution Betrayed p249
- (13) Capital lll
- (14) R.Michels : Political Parties p305
- (15) ibid p401
- (16) ibid 408
- (17) Marx Grundrisse quoted by M.Nicolaus in New Left Review No.48 p58
- (18) Lenin : What is to be Done FLPH Moscow p50
- (19) Political Parties p237
- (20) ibid p383
- (21) Revolution Betrayed p249
- (22) Marx : German Ideology p86

AUSTRALIA'S "LEFT CONVENTION"

by Michael Quinn

Australia's "Left Convention", held in April, was a much more promising development than London's, judging from the comments which have just reached us. In the immediate future there seems to be a greater possibility of a united revolutionary movement, with a mass base in the working class and amongst students, emerging in Australia. The reasons for this are to be found in the more advanced ideological differentiation occurring in the Communist Party there, in the relatively early emergence of the revolutionary potential of the 'white collar' workers in Australia, in the fact that the Australian left movement, developed a little behind those in other advanced capitalist countries, can learn from the experience of those countries, and in the perceptive boldness of some comrades in the ranks of the 'groupuscules'.

While this greater promise is due mainly to different objective conditions and local peculiarities, some lessons could be drawn from the Australian situation.

The organisers of the Australian "Left Action Conference" as it was called - secured the co-operation and serious participation of all the forces of the Left, whereas the London conference was marked by obvious absences and by the lack of serious preparation by many delegates.

800 delegates and participants attended the Australian conference (Australian population: 12 million) and these comrades represented every left tendency in the working class and socialist movement: - from the left trade

union leaders through to ultra-left Maoists. As for the social composition of the delegates: - the biggest blocs were : 130 tertiary level students, 35 secondary school students and 125 industrial workers.

The delegates came in response to the necessity to evaluate their experience, work out perspectives and co-ordinate future action. Already in January, the 'groupuscules' had met to form a loose "Revolutionary Socialist Alliance" in response to the same necessities.

The numbers involved in anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist struggles, and the heat of these struggles, has gone up in the last few years in Australia. Not only has industrial militancy increased but there have been a number of conspicuous stand-up fights over 'control' - not just building workers taking safety arrangements into their own hands but striking teachers claiming control over certain things inside the school and demanding the creation of a supreme Education Commission on which they would have half the members, and pilots demanding the power to draw up their own schedules and decide on the composition of crews. Black workers too have started, for the first time, to take strike action. Naturally, too, there have been the student battles, mobilising increasing numbers, against imperialist violence in Vietnam, burgeoning authoritarianism at home, and university oligarchs. And as well, secondary school students have acted against the war, school oppression and deprivation; there have been three school sit-ins in Sydney this year.

The bringing together of all militants embroiled in these struggles was largely made possible by changes in the Communist Party of Australia. In fact, the "Left Action Conference" was initiated by leaders of the C.P.A. The C.P.A. has proportionally the same membership as the British CP, and like that party has significant strength in industry but little or no electoral support. The C.P.A. wields more influence over its Labour Party and trade union 'left' than does the CPGB.

The C.P.A. is undoubtedly the most democratic CP in the world, it is no longer exceptional for this Party's weekly paper to carry analyses, written by Trotskyites on the bureaucratic degeneration which occurred in the Soviet Union or on the future of the workers' control movement.

It is also one of the most independent of the world's communist parties and was one of the first to condemn the five Warsaw Pact states' invasion of Czechoslovakia. Nor was the C.P.A. leadership content with the explanation - accepted by the British CP leaders - that the 'neo-Stalinists in the Kremlin were 'trigger-happy' about imperialist threats to their security and that was why they marched in. The invasion of Czechoslovakia and its continued consequences, has meant a continuing debate in the C.P.A. over the nature of the Soviet Union today.

The leadership of this independent and democratic CP - with its aging membership - has recently decided on a 'left course' - after fruitlessly pursuing a right-wing tangent from 1965 to 1967 and cutting itself off from the revolutionary students and young workers. This new 'left course' naturally entails a certain wooing of the 'groupuscules.

Predictably, this 'left turn' of the leadership has aroused a strong minority opposition in the C.P.A. This opposition is led by, and composed of, almost all the Party's trade union leaders - who are, almost to a man, routinists and neo-Stalinists as well as pro-Russian. Characteristically, two of these union leaders were touring the 'socialist countries' at the time of the Czechoslovak occupation, and issued blood-curdling statement of support for the invasion. These union leaders have been the bulwark of the C. P.A. in the past and are - if Moscow gives the word - likely to split away and form a pro-Moscow C.P.A. taking a lot of the membership with them. Understandably, the C.P.A. leaders do not like the prospect and there are observers who are certain that the leaders will - before the crunch - sacrifice anything to avoid this happening; yet there is so far no indication of the leadership abandoning the new course.

The most obvious manifestation of this 'left turn' has been in the industrial policies of the C.P.A. leaders; they have adopted the cause of 'workers' control' and 'self-management' and pronounced themselves in favour of a confrontation with and struggles against the compulsory arbitration and its attendant penal system.

(In Australia, immediately a strike begins, the boss can get a court order making the strike illegal. After that, the dispute is theoretically supposed to go before an impartial bourgeois judge who then settles it; his decision carrying the force of law. If the men continue to strike in defiance of the court order, then the union to which they belong can be fined up to 1000 dollars a day (£450) - regardless of the position of union officials.

Last year, during a strike in the metal industry, unions were fined 100,000 dollars.

The only exception to this general position is Western Australia where fines can be imposed on unofficial strikers personally. They had an experience of this law last year which should interest the British comrades. Seven boilermakers, 'convicted' of striking, after a court order ordered them back refused to pay the fines imposed on them. The state government proposed to gaol them; the unions threatened a general strike and the prison warders union announced it would never accept them as prisoners. Eventually the 'anonymous' employers paid the fines.)

The 'Left Action Conference' was, then, the result of resurgent class struggle, the desire for effective, united left offensives, and the encouraging - even if limited to mostly words and gestures so far - the evolution of part of the C.P.A. which made such a meeting with the revolutionary left possible.... wary as this revolutionary left remains.

The two major decisions of the Australian conference were: to launch a solidarity-with-the-NLF campaign and to convene a conference on workers' control and self-management. These were both issues raised by the non-CP revolutionary left.

Since its inception the Australian 'anti-war movement', has, for the most part, never gone beyond demanding withdrawal of the Australian troops from Vietnam. But in 1967 groups of students initiated solidarity campaigns in this 'South Africa' of Asia. Of course, parliament immediately made this illegal. Yet all the small groups continued their campaigning (at times

sanctioned, if not fully supported by mass student rallies) and now the majority of the left have committed themselves to an anti-imperialist and internationalist position, thereby re-activating one of the best traditions of the Australian labour movement. This decision is not merely important now, but as a precedent and preparation for the future, because the Australian ruling class, which supports every counter-revolutionary regime in Asia, will surely become involved in other Vietnams in the future.

After years of propaganda work by the Australian section of the Fourth International, after the recent strikes and struggles against the power of boss and bureaucrat, after the recent conversion of part of the C.P.A., the decision to convene a conference on 'workers' control and self-management' - note well the formulation - was passed without opposition. Determined to avoid some of the traps of earlier movements of this kind, delegate after delegate spoke against 'participation' and about workers' control struggles and victories as preparatory steps leading up to the seizure of power by the working class and self-management of the whole of society.

Not only will the Australian control movement learn a lot from the pioneering movement in Britain but vice versa. The speech to the conference of Denis Freney (RSA) is an example. Freney advocated a renewed syndicalism exercised by action committees at the base, in all spheres of society. He spoke of 'self-management', not only as the essence of a future socialist society, not only as an immediate slogan which gave meaning and perspective to all the rebellions against capitalist authority and workers' temporary conquests of this or that area of authority, but as a tactic for present and future use in the form of active occupations whenever possible. The revolution and socialist society must be anticipated and boldly prepared for.

Freney gave as an example of what he meant. Recently there was a national rail strike in Australia, and he suggested that during the next rail strike comrades involved should urge not only occupation but active occupation, with running of the trains for commuting workers by the workers themselves. He continued: "Someone from the floor mentioned the example of the Tokyo busmen who did just such a thing. Is it so outlandish? I believe it is not. Such action would not antagonise the working and travelling public, and would thus disarm the capitalist press of one of its main anti-strike propaganda means. But in addition, and more important, it would give a living example to the workers throughout the economy of what they could do if they wished."

The nascent Australian workers' control and self-management movement - learning from the British movement and the May revolt in France and anticipating what the workers in the bureaucratic Eastern European countries will do when they rise - is determined to avoid 'participation' traps and is oriented towards occupations, seizures of power, and the workers, students and citizens managing the whole of society themselves.

Finally, because his speech is remarkable and because he was the initiator of the conference, I will give a general summary of the speech delivered by Laurie Aarons, national secretary of the C.P.A. In this long, wide-ranging speech he outlines the features of the democratic state and self-managing society of abundance made possible by the scientific and technological revolution and which could be constructed in an advanced country after a socialist revolution. He provides a useful description of imperialist, bureau-

-cratic, monopoly capitalism which distorts, stunts and denies possibilities for the full human development made possible by the technological revolution. He draws out, and suggests solutions to the problems of unifying the working class, including its new strata and the radical students and, in a general way, nominates the issues which will mobilise them. He outlines such demands as: a minimum living wage and increased leisure time based on the new expectations, the struggle for democratic social control, and aid to anti-imperialist movements. He recognized also the need to contest the ruling power structure's 'cultural' hegemony, by which capitalism gets its subjects to 'love' it and accept it.

But Aarons is most stimulating in the section of his speech he sub-titles "methods of action". On parliamentary gradualism and revolutionary force he says:

"If we mean just revolution by the ballot, this is certainly unreal; any serious structural reforms, let alone fundamental social change, can only be pushed through by a mass movement outside parliament... the New Guard /Australia's fascists in the 1930's, M.Q./ was only beaten by workers' counter to fascist violence. The aim of socialist revolution without civil war can only be realised through creating an overwhelming balance of mass opinion backed up by a mighty mass movement of strikes, demonstrations, occupation of decisive factories and institutions, by so dividing the men who make up coercive power of the state as to intimidate the controllers and rulers of the system. This obviously is impossible without mass action and struggles, confrontation and defeat of reactionary violence, intimidating and paralysing those who would prefer civil war rather than a revolutionary social change that destroys their power and privilege."

As to the question of whether Australian society would ever be gripped by a revolutionary crisis "when the majority can no longer live, and the minority can no longer rule, in the old ways"; Aarons answers - YES. And goes on to outline some of the possible developments in Australian capitalism's internal contradictions and external relations which could lead to such a crisis and emphasises the need for theoretical work to narrow the general possibilities down to more concrete expectations which can be prepared for.

If such a revolutionary eruption is to culminate in a successful socialist revolution then a mass revolutionary party - initiating action, standing in the front line with the class, arousing and advising it - is necessary.

If the dominant, anti-bureaucratic, wing of the C.P.A. continues its evolution; taking clear revolutionary initiatives and publicly repudiating Stalinism, its conjunction with the small forces of revolutionary socialism in a reconstituted, democratic, communist party is possible. Such a party with a membership of thousands, combining the over-35 rank and file industrial militants of the C.P.A. with the revolutionary young students and workers, would be of great aid in the liberation struggles in Australia and in South Asia.

The Australian 'Left Action Conference' certainly was a step towards the birth of such a party, one of a new type, relevant to the new social and historical conditions we now live in.

THE CLIFF VERSUS HEALY DEBATE
AT THE UNIVERSITY OF LONDON UNION 10TH FEBRUARY 1969.

By James Greenlark

I expected this debate to be good knockabout sectarian stuff. But it was most stimulating politically. Cliff and Healy speaking together - dialectically fused - create political positions and conflicts far more revealing than Cliff and Healy could at their own separate meetings. Never having been a member of either sect, my initial sympathies were with the IS because of their greater apparent flexibility and academic bent. This debate gave me a different perspective which could not have appeared from any number of separate IS or SLL meetings. Despite Tony Cliff's wit and his fluency in pointing out the SLL's inadequacies, and despite the SLL's obvious theoretical sclerosis, the picture emerged of the SLL, warts and all, as a group which was more consistent and experienced in the problems of revolutionary organisation, making the IS look eclectic and fanciful in their theory and lightweight in their organisation. These are my subjective impressions of why this is so.

Cliff's major attack was on the SLL's lack of theory compared with IS's creative application of Marxism to modern capitalism (i.e. Kidron; Western Capitalism since the War). Within a relatively short historical period before 1917 Bukharin, Hilferding and Lenin produced works on imperialism. Now when the changes in capitalism were even faster than then the SLL had published nothing new since Trotsky died in 1940. "They have a fantastic printing house producing very good editions of old books" was one riposte: another was that the SLL had produced nothing on automation because Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky lived before automation was thought of. Then Cliff turned to some of the SLL's errors: they thought Attlee in 1945 was the Keren-sky figure who would last about a year, supported Tribune in their anti-German campaign 1954-7, had Bessie Braddock on their editorial board, spoke of impending centuries of Stalinism in 1952, supported the soggy CND but boycotted the militant VSC. According to Cliff the SLL was both ultra left and opportunist.

None of the SLL speakers returned to these specific accusations, nor to the attack on their absence of 'modern' theoretical work. Other speakers such as Chris Harman (IS) took this up, demanding what the SLL's line was on Czechoslovakia, Hungary, the Sino-Soviet split, Cuba etc. Superficially this is reasonable enough. However Healy did not respond to this challenge. He called it academic and piecemeal, and despite the cumbersomeness and monotony of his political vocabulary he did have a general line which was consistent and theoretically integrated: that is he did not need to reply to all the detailed arguments thrown up by the IS because the reply was implicit in the line he laid down.

Initially it seemed, at least to me, that Healy's flat footed and repetitive approach would be no match for Cliff's rhetorical wit or John Palmer's theoretical ability. But eventually the atoms of the conflict moved their position and rearranged themselves to change the picture. Cliff's humour did pall and his speaking tricks become obvious ("Why did they do this? I'll tell you for why"); and the theory of the IS precisely because of its wide ranging character began to look like the patchwork of an unsystematic eclecticism.

Tony Cliff's boast that the IS - unlike the SLL - were not afraid to produce a volume of their collected essays and that he himself had dealt with Eastern Europe, Russia and China in his own writings, merely exposed their tendency towards the artificial academic approach that theory = publication. The SLL neither denied nor confirmed the 'absence' of this type of theory in their movement but the assertion that their theory derives from the working class struggles they are involved in has potentially a far greater applicability and makes the IS look pastily academic. IS's latest theories may be hot from the presses and explain the very latest manifestations of capitalism - permanent arms economy etc. - but the method betrays weaknesses in its attempt to be a comprehensive world view. It is so up to date that it risks generalisation on too short a period, and despite the surrounding aura of 'creative application of Marxism', the whole edifice rests upon the dogma of state capitalism, conceived in a sectarian struggle between Cliff and the SLL. Of course, both parties are dogmatic, especially on the state capitalism/degenerate workers' state controversy, and therefore their respective contributions are valueless theoretically: but the IS maintains with some success that it is the non-dogmatic party because of its creative Marxism, and casts the SLL in the role of the protectors of a stunted Marxist orthodoxy. Later on I will maintain that the IS is paradoxically enough the more dogmatic of the two because of its abstracted theory, whilst the SLL's dogmatism does relate to a greater degree of revolutionary practice.

Cliff was eloquent and convincing on the new revolutionary temper of workers and students. For the last 20 years he said, revolutionary groups had been isolated; now at last the fragments were coming together. It was an attractive new dawn that he painted, but it dissolved as easily as it was built up when an old SLL member from the floor pointed out what they had been doing for the last 20 years (principally anti-reformism) - two decades of experience which Cliff glibly passed over as wasted. I am not arguing that what the SLL did in those years was even predominantly correct, or that the situation is not more hopeful now than it was then: simply that the intervention by this old militant showed up the speculative nature of Cliff's promises of future organisation. The political experience of the SLL in the 'barren' fifties and early sixties is probably unique in Britain because it has meant pushing a non-reformist programme through constant contact with workers in immediate struggles. This experience has been digested and analysed, so that some members will know a great deal of the history of industrial struggles, as well as technical details about work and pay systems, and forms of exploitation. I would hazard that the IS have not the history of discipline or the work-level contact to accumulate such experience. Parenthetically one could say the SLL has probably had too little time to build up a formal theory and to argue academically with those who it thinks are not seriously revolutionary anyway, because it has been too occupied with political and industrial work.

Healy has an aggressive and noisy style of speaking. He emphasised that the differences were not just subjective and personal but actually had a class content. He rejected the IS's blanket approach to membership where the only condition of joining "Cliff's Group" was agreement on 4 points - for nationalisation, against imperialism, anti-trade union laws, and immigration laws. The SLL's position was that a programme was not just a series of demands. It

had to embody all the historic experiences of the working class that has gone into those demands. The IS had a light minded approach to theory altogether because it chose these demands in a political vacuum.

After dealing with the USSR and the reasons why Marxist-Leninists should continue to support it against the attacks of world imperialism Healy went on to the fission of the IS from the SLL. Although Cliff had formed his theories on state capitalism during the late 40's whilst still in the SLL, he did not break away to form the IS group until the period of the Korean War when the whole of the Labour movement stood with imperialism against the Communist world. This, he explained, was why the Cliff group was idealist and superficial from its inception. They took a theory based on ideal categories of capitalism/state capitalism which were wholly un-Marxian and used it in an opportunist way to attract support from the anti-Communist Labour movement. The SLL supported the North Koreans. Since then the dispute between the two groups has magnified to include all sorts of esoteric issues about the analysis of communism/capitalism, such as the "Trade Union Analogy" - the question of whether the simultaneous support of Britain and the USSR to both Federal Nigeria against Biafra and the Indian bourgeoisie v China confirms the thesis about "Kremlin diplomacy"; or illuminating dialogues on these lines.

SLL Cuba is not one of the socialist countries.

IS Why not? It has state ownership and planning like all the other countries you acknowledge as socialist.

SLL Because there are no soviets.

IS But there have been no soviets in the USSR since 1927. etc. etc.

Of course all these issues - which only need one shout of "Czechoslovakia" "Hungary", or "Kremlin diplomacy" to be reactivated in sectarian minds - did or do have some real meaning and basis in fact. However to outsiders they are completely opaque in these real terms, even though the introduction of new issues and old ones can always be recognised by the baring of theoretical teeth. Only an avid reader of The Newsletter and Socialist Worker would know what each one was. I myself had never heard of the "Trade Union Analogy" before this meeting; apparently it is something to do with the fact that Russian bureaucrats/state capitalists have tanks whereas Western Trade Union leaders don't. But even if one did understand the terms, the arguments are cast in such dogmatic moulds that any flexibility of thought or fresh illumination of the question is quite ruled out. The categories are wholly static. The whole argument degrades history - as for example in the more well known 'Spot the Date' contest where sects define the point at which the USSR degenerated. Six months after 1917 are apparently enough for the Anarchists. The 'Solidarity' group found Kronstadt too hard to swallow, so they defend the USSR up to 1921. The IS held on retrospectively until 1924 when Stalin became ascendant, whilst the SLL go on until 1927 when Trotsky resigned. A type of academic Keystone Cops follows. For instance the IS has to defend Kronstadt and the USSR 1921-4 on one chronological flank from Solidarity, but when the magic date is passed they can launch an all out attack on the SLL for the degeneracy which took place in 1924-7 when Trotsky still had influence. Whatever continuity of historical explanation there may be in any of the theories is destroyed by this mechanical argument over the dates.

Healy referred specifically to the question of the unification of left organisations. "When we talk of unity with an opponent organisation, it is to get rid of that organisation. We are in arms against you". The real reason for unity was to bring these groups like IS into the SLL in order to work out the political differences and draw them from an idealist position to a Marxist one. The SLL are pursuing a political attack on the IS tendency - which is the only reason they agreed to the debate at all - and unity will come at the conclusion of the attack, when the IS is absorbed into the SLL and has taken up its line. The SLL were not 'unitymongers' on the basis of four points or anything else. The IS speakers said nothing on the question of unity, presumably because they regard it as more of an organisational than a theoretical one. However there was discussion on the related question of party discipline. The SLL take the view that they are a Leninist party because of their party discipline and their theoretical line, whereas the IS leans towards a Menshevik or social-democratic organisational theory because of its willingness to accept all who subscribe to the 4 points and may otherwise be inactive - e.g. Alasdair MacIntyre. Naturally both parties are anxious to maintain that their position is that of Lenin himself. Cliff maintained that the split between the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks was not over Article 1 of the Charter where the former wanted membership conditional on revolutionary activism, whereas the latter wanted to extend membership to all who agreed on certain broad socialist principles. The object of this is to show that the IS are not in the opprobrious Menshevik position. Cliff further argued that the Bolsheviks before and during 1917 were a party of extreme democracy in contrast to the SLL which has no inner party democracy. He gave as an example the case of Zinoviev and Kamenev who revealed the plans of the October insurrection to Gorky's newspaper because they disagreed with the policy, yet they stayed within the party and went on to important posts. (Actually, Deutscher says on this point: "Lenin beside himself with indignation demanded the immediate expulsion from the party of the two 'strikebreakers of the revolution'. His demand fell on deaf ears..." Trotsky. Vol 1. pp 301-2) A second example was Bukharin and his erratic ideas, from which Cliff rhetorically concluded "If Lenin could tolerate Bukharin, we can tolerate the SLL". This sort of argument discloses the lack of contact between the two sides, since for the SLL the question never was whether separate political tendencies 'could' fit together in one organisation. Similarly most of the shafts from the SLL were wide of the mark, although they concentrated more on putting the line than on distinguishing themselves from the IS. On the question of 'blanket' or 'disciplined' parties the evidence would appear to suggest that the SLL was following the Leninist line in its attitude to unity:

"(Lenin) was determined that Trotsky and Trotsky's friends should join his party. Inside it, he was willing to accord them every democratic right, to share with them his influence, and, as the record shows, to allow himself to be outvoted on important occasions. But he was not prepared to scrap his party and merge it with minor groups into a new body." (1)

However the fact that the SLL may be closer to Lenin's view has a purely historical rather than a (contemporary) theoretical importance, and if the IS are in fact creatively applying Marxism it is hardly necessary to show that their theory corresponds to what Lenin wrote 50 years ago.

Can one come to a comparative assessment of the two groups? Are they just Tweedle Dum and Tweedle Dee as a speaker from the New Left Review suggested? My own feeling is that they are both irrelevant to the type of revolutionary activity we require now, and both likely to remain politically useless; but that the SLL is far more principled and theoretically consistent and has the embryo of a revolutionary party even if it is most unlikely to be fulfilled. In contrast the IS already discloses elements of opportunistic organisation and theory leading to a reformist party whose potential is much more likely to be fulfilled.

This may seem to be a rather sweeping generalisation. There are a number of different levels and subjects of argument at which I think it could be demonstrated. For example the SLL was prepared on principle to defend the "workers' bomb" before the liberals of CND, which would hardly have gained it great popularity. Similarly their very political approach to industrial struggles is considered naive by the IS who prefer to gain support for revolutionary measures gradually through pressing economic demands - "If you're asking for £1 a week more, why not £5?". According to IS accounts the SLL go to the Joint Sites Committee and bore the workers silly talking about Trotsky. Assuming that the SLL are not in fact so stupid as to do this, the difference in approach does not mean that the IS would achieve the same result rather more subtly. Gradualism and economism may tactically be transitional demands, but historically they have been the rationalisations of social democrats; moreover they are a form of manipulation which soon becomes noticeable and creates distrust, whereas a state of principle at worst may only produce indifference.

The IS, one feels, has less confidence in the argument: perhaps because they themselves as well as the audience need convincing, which is again why a gradualist line is taken in the first place. Quite likely the gradualism is a reflection of their own lack of revolutionary confidence and is rationalised as being a necessary tactic.

Critically one could suggest that the SLL only have their confidence in revolutionary politics because of an absurd and dogmatic faith ("Their theory and heritage is religious, kept in a box". Cliff) Overlooking - if possible - the exaggeration this brings up the central question of the whole dispute and the one which illustrates the distinction I drew between the SLL as revolutionary if ineffective and the IS as reformist. It is the role of theory.

The historical context within which the respective theories are formed is the decisive one for evaluating its political tendency. Both groups are part of the heritage of Stalinism, but in very different ways. The SLL was part of the response of the Trotskyites to the reality of Stalinism. It was not merely the mirror image of Stalinism, but emerged alongside it from the reality of the Russian revolution. Because of this Trotskyism has a definite location in the historical praxis of revolution. This is both the strength and weakness of the SLL, because its origins were in a revolutionary struggle giving it a unique theoretical strength: yet at the same time the endurance of Stalinism (and capitalism) means that the theory is put into historical suspension if not entirely outdated. When he drew up his theories on the nature of the Soviet bureaucracy, Trotsky never envisaged that it would adapt to survive so long, essentially unchanged in terms of the SLL's theories. As

Marxists, the SLL are placed in a literally absurd position, whose irrationality comes from the same historical juncture as does the 'absurdity' (for Marxists) of Stalinism - namely the situation of the CPSU in the twenties when the expected revolution in the West did not materialise. This is Marcuse's idea about Soviet theory, and the same thing is true of the SLL:

"It (Soviet theory) defies reason; it seems absurd. But the absurdity of Soviet Marxism has an objective ground: it reflects the absurdity of a historical situation in which the realisation of the Marxian promises appeared - only to be delayed again - and in which the new productive forces are again used as instruments for productive repression. The ritualized language preserves the original content of Marxian theory as a truth that must be believed and enacted against all evidence to the contrary...Hypostatized into a ritual pattern, Marxian theory becomes ideology. But its content and function distinguish it from the "classical" forms of ideology: it is not "false consciousness" but rather consciousness of falsehood, a falsehood which is "corrected" in the context of the "higher truth" represented by the objective historical interest." (2)

Here the crucial differences in the role of theory for the IS and the SLL occur. Both are responding to the distortion of Stalinism which for any Marxist is a historical irrationality. The SLL recognise it to be an irrationality and maintain in spite of it a line which is recognisably Marxist Leninist.

"The ritualisation of this theory has kept it alive against the power of factual refutation and communicated it, in ideological form, to a backward and suppressed population which is to be whipped into political action, contesting and challenging advanced industrial civilisation. In its magical use Marxist theory assumes a new rationality." (3)

But the IS is effectively denying the irrationality (for Marxists) of Stalinism because they produce a 'rational' theory of State Capitalism which is empirically based. The SLL's approach is to maintain the rationality of original Marxism and the irrationality of contemporary Communism: which, failing revolutionary changes, means they will remain prophets in the wilderness. The IS naturally appear more realistic and pragmatic in explaining the rationality of Stalinism but it is at the expense of making the original Marxist political economy irrational - that is at the expense of revising, not adapting Marx. Stalinism has meant that the 'truth' (in the Hegalian sense) of Marxism is not fulfilled: the SLL maintains this truth despite the changing political situation, and thus appears to be very dogmatic. This does, whatever its faults, keep alive a form of insurrectionary Marxism. The IS adapts to the changing political situation by making the existent the rational and generalising on a short term historical reality (a theoretical approach which is organically connected to its political line of tactical expediency). This makes it more flexible but at the expense of a degree of eclectic and empirical theory which makes them nearly identical with traditional University socialists.

What is meant by 'rational' and 'irrational' in this sense? Why is there an objection to this type of empiricist explanation or theory? How, for a materialist theory can anything be irrational providing it exists? The answer is that one cannot take Stalinism as a separate historical instance and build

a new and separate theory of political economy upon it. In fact Marxist theory is adequate to explain the 'peculiarity' of Stalinism and the Russian revolution, but as yet it has not been developed to the extent where it can clearly do so. In other words Marx's own political economy of (British) capitalism has not yet been extended to become a world political economy. For instance it does not account for the simultaneous existence of socialism (in one or several countries) and capitalism. In terms of a Marxist theory of imperialism and underdevelopment, the reason why the Russian revolution occurred at all cannot be accounted for by IS or SLL type theories. There are in their theories superstructural-political conclusions drawn from the period of world imperialism - e.g. labour aristocracy - but there is no developed Marxist theory which explains how the contradictions of capitalism are exported, why to one place rather than another, and the feed back of these exported contradictions on developed capitalist economies. This situation is manifested in Marxist theory today by the meaningless split between the third worlders and the industrial proletarians. Meaningless, because there are no substantial connections elaborated in a dynamic theory - instead, especially for the New Left Reviewers, there is only a descriptive analysis dressed up as multifactorialism or overdetermination. Dialectically the connection must be between these two theatres. Most socialists, if questioned, would say that the situation of the Russian revolution in world political economy is that of the weakest link. But how in fact does this theory of the weakest link actually work? What are the concrete relations? Marxism, in terms of the capitalist political economy, in fact contains the genesis of such an elaboration of the new laws of motion, of the world political economy. The laws of pure capitalism were superseded before the completion of their motion - the owl of Minerva had flown out at dusk. Such a revolution in theory towards a world political economy which this new economic epoch implies would be a far more appropriate basis for a contemporary Marxist theory of capitalism/socialism than is a separate theory of the USSR as it developed under state capitalism or bureaucracy. In other words, we must develop Marxism and make it a world political economy inclusive of socialist countries instead of leaving it as a capitalist political economy, to which is adduced a separate theory of state capitalism. The theory of state capitalism is incompatible with Marxism and literally 'revises' it because it is a case of eclectically tacking on a pre revolutionary theoretical category to the new developed stage of world political economy. State capitalism is methodologically un-Marxian because it abstracts capitalism from its particular historical location and uses it, like political scientists use 'totalitarianism', as an abstract category to be imposed on a situation which has developed beyond the historical limits of the capitalist epoch. Capitalism never occurs twice, just as history never repeats itself. The fact that the IS uses these abstract categories is both the result and the cause of its political expediency. The determinants of its political line are ephemeral and theoretically unhistorical, which is why they can be so easily used to justify short run reformist demands. Moreover they give little guidance to the future because there are no connecting links and no theoretical dynamic.

- (1) Deutscher: The Prophet Armed. Trotsky 1879 - 1921. p. 257. O.U.P. 1954
- (2) Marcuse: Soviet Marxism. pp. 91 & 89.
- (3) *ibid*: p. 90.

A REPLY TO RAYMOND CHALLINOR

by Ken Coates

Raymond Challinor's attack on the Worker's Control Conference (in "International Socialism" June/July, 1969) is really quite disgraceful. To deal only with the factual matters in it, is to confront so low a level of polemic honesty that it is difficult to remember any journal of the left, leave alone IS, having sunk beneath it.

To speak about "conference rigging" at Sheffield is a complete travesty of all the facts. The Conference arrangements committee had full charge of the Conference subject to the approval of the Conference itself. It consisted of six people, three of whom were nominated by the Institute for Workers' Control, which organised the Conference; and three of whom were elected by the full Conference during its first quarter of an hour. The three IWC representatives were carefully chosen to represent a fair cross-section of opinion within the Institute, and included one IS sympathiser. The reason that they could not include an IS member is that the IS members we approached all declined to join in the work of the Institute, sometimes in spite of repeated invitations. The three representatives from the floor were all rank-and-file trade unionists, none of whom had any factional axe to grind. From the moment that the committee took over "Coates and Co", far from 'manipulating' the conference, were as completely in its hands as was Ray Challinor. This was so much the case that, although I personally had the very deepest reservations about one or two points in the final resolution, the fact that the Committee presented it meant that I had no option but to speak to it as it was.

I do not mention this fact in order to complain, but in order to establish what really happened. Apparently this committee could not find time to discuss a motion submitted by Challinor on what he was pleased to term "Ford's Sell-out". This is regrettable; but there was a representative contingent of Ford's Shop Stewards at the Conference who not only did not complain about the decision of the Conference arrangements committee, but who apparently had never been consulted by this Lancashire teacher as to whether they wished Conference to consider any such motion or not. As for Challinor's charges about resolutions, they are absolutely misleading. Such Conferences have never considered large numbers of resolutions, because they have been primarily discussion gatherings, hinged around a whole series of industrial seminars.

These seminars are and always have been the hub of the whole weekend's work and they are totally self-regulating. Anyone can call for seminar time, and there has never been a single case of it being refused. More: the seminars discuss papers prepared in advance, and anyone can submit such a paper. All the papers which have ever been submitted in time have been duplicated and circulated to all conference participants. Needless to say, Challinor has never submitted a paper. It is perfectly obvious that no-one could personally agree with all the vast volume of papers which have been circulated; but at the same time that he charges us with lack of democracy, Challinor reproaches us for publishing material he does not like. What should we do in such a case? Suppress it?

It is a plain, bald, and disgraceful lie that "the rank-and-file found

their time limited to an hour." It would be nearer to the truth to say that there was, during the whole weekend, about an hour of platform time. Nearly all Saturday's deliberations were in seminar, at which the rank and file had all the time. Sunday morning consisted of reports from seminars and discussion in plenary session of those reports. The "platform" took none of that time. Sunday afternoon consisted of a speech by Hugh Scanlon, and a debate on the general resolution. Challinor reveals his total contempt for the democratic process when he says that this amounts to "an hour" of rank and file discussion: what it means is that he doesn't count the seminars as being rank and file discussion, because they talk about real problems, and not about what Challinor wants then to talk about.

For him, since he embodies "the revolution" the only true rank-and-file time is that spent listening to himself. The internal democracy of the IWC, and of the Workers' Control Movement, compares more than favourably with that of IS, or any of the other socialist groupings I have encountered, in a rich experience of such bodies.

Challinor's political points are almost equally dishonest. He misquotes Topham, and puts words into his mouth which he never wrote, and he takes quotations of mine totally out of their internal context, never mind their historical setting. Challinor cannot reproach me in the slightest degree for my resistance to Wilsonism: my record is plain, and will stand comparison with that of any comrade in IS. Indeed, was it because IS were in the vanguard of the resistance to Wilson's politics that I was expelled from the Labour Party while Challinor and many other IS comrades, both militant and less than militant were given a continued licence to prattle harmlessly on?

The basic political point Challinor makes is that he is against the fight for left unity. When Danny McGarvey attacked In Place of Strife, he deserved support in doing so, whatever criticism he had earned the day before. Criticism of such leaders as Jack Jones and Hugh Scanlon is perfectly in order, but it must be based on informed understanding and not witch-hunting prejudice. If Challinor really wants to help the working-class movement he should learn to distinguish between mistakes in leadership, which even he would make, and betrayals. His quotations from Trotsky would be more impressive, if he explained why it was that after 1940, when further reforms were pronounced impossible ("the objective conditions leave no room for any serious and lasting reforms") we then entered into two decades of the triumph of reformism, in which more reforms were made than ever before. The sociology he commits himself to is unbelievably crude and stupid. Today, it is perfectly true that the bases for reform are more attenuated than they have been for the past twenty years, which themselves, according to scripture, never happened: and it is surely true that the old reformist strategy will therefore no longer work. If he would get his head out of the scriptures, and think a bit, Challinor might be able to help us evolve a meaningful strategy of socialist struggle to meet this situation. At the moment, however, he would rather sprinkle holy water and hunt witches. Where does this neurotic search for conformity lead? After having cut the throats of the left centrists and social democrats, poisoned the Stalinist betrayers (by which he'll mean the Wigan YCL) and opened fierce battle with the Pablo revisionists, what will he do next? Undoubtedly the logic is very simple: he'll begin to purge the evil-doers and traitors within IS itself. First target will be all those comrades who have

been trying to grapple with the real problems of productivity bargaining, in much the same terms as we ourselves in the IWC. After this, who knows? What is clear is that at the end of this great drive for purity, what he will confront is not the organised revolutionary working class, agog for action, but something very different: his own sorry caucus, in which the only truly reliable member will be the Challinor family dog.

The truth is that a working class socialism, as opposed to a beatnik socialism, can only grow up in discussion and action within the factories and trade union branches, which can never be "purified" in the way Challinor wishes. Drive out the unspeakable Coates and you will still face the problem: the IWC talks with more workers than all the sects combined because it carries a very minimum of preconceived ideas, and relies on the creative drive and imagination of the workers themselves: it learns from the Communist Manifesto, that "the Communists do not form a separate party opposed to other working class parties. They have no interests separate and apart from those of the proletariat as a whole".

Instead of trying to wreck such work, IS comrades should be participating in it, for all they are worth.

EDITORIAL POSTSCRIPT

We would like to endorse Ken Coates' reply to Raymond Challinor. The level and tone of Challinor's article were such as to deserve the sharp reply that it has received. It is symptomatic of sectarian politics that the IS Group should publish such a distorted account of the Workers' Control Conference. It is also symptomatic that Socialist Worker, the weekly paper of IS, could not find room for the appeal put out by the Joint Shop Stewards' Action Committee GEC-EE Merseyside on the week before the proposed occupation (not sit in). Yet it found room for a lengthy lecture on what this group of workers should do about politicising the struggle. Such advice would have been acceptable had the workers themselves been allowed to put their case in the pages of Socialist Worker. However, we feel that at such a time the first task of Marxists is to solidarise themselves with these particular workers, and in a very practical manner by sending donations and getting the support of as many organisations of the Labour movement as possible, as outlined in the Joint Action Committee appeal.

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