

BUREAUCRATS 'LEFT' CONFERENCE

It has been seventeen years since the last attempt to bring the left together. In 1979 the CPA initiated a Left Action conference which was also held over Easter. But there is a big difference in whom they are seeking unity with. The 1979 conference boasted unity with New Left radicals, draft resisters, 'Maoist and Fourth Internationalist tendencies'. The CPA(M/L) denounced the conference: "There can be no unity with traitors". There was talk of confrontation with the system which came riot just from Layer, Langer and Gould but also Laurie Aarons and Laurie Carmichael. Whilst the Communist Left is indeed critical of the conference's politics the spirit of struggle is acknowledged. A resolution calling for a conference on workers' control was carried. The next month an historic strike wave liberated Clarrie O'Shea, militant unionist jailed under the penal clauses.

The Broad Left conference is also initiated by the CPA along with the Association of Communist Unity (who were then in the CPA). There is indeed a difference in the idea of the composition of 'unity' this time round. The conference is opened by Brian Howe, a minister in the Hawke government.

Amongst those who the organisers consider comrades include:

- Hugh Hamilton who, on behalf of the QLD Building Trades Group withdrew strike action in support of the sacked SEQEB workers;
- Supporters of the racist Green paper for Blacks moved in the NSW state parliament, including George Petersen;
- Supporters of foreign bases in Australia and supporters of uranium mining;
- Passive acceptors and overt supporters of the bosses' attacks on the BIF;
- Members of the NSW Building Trades Group who supported physical eviction by thugs of the Glebe Estate squatters and tolerated the use of scab labour;
- A speaker at an Australian Marxist Forum meeting openly advocated "wage rises cause inflation" with no opposition from anyone at the meeting (the Communist Left was not allowed to speak).

Despite the participation of overt traitors the CPA(M/L) is participating.

These by no means exhaust the betrayals by supporters of the heterogeneous group initiating this conference. We are not saying that all of these are supported by all behind this conference. However their presence exposes quite clearly the nature of this conference. You see whilst supporters and even organisers of this conference may beg to differ and even at times claim to oppose their comrades it is 'uncomradely' and even polarising to attack them for selling out. Polarising this conference is something the organisers explicitly do not want to do. Therefore there can be no defence of the BLF, defence of the Glebe squatters, no opposition to foreign military bases or support for blacks, no defence of the SEQEB workers as to advocate a fightback would disrupt the unity so desired by the organisers of the conference. For example there can be no defence of the SEQEB workers who cannot win alone, without a political struggle against Hugh Hamilton and his cronies who are deliberately sabotaging strike action.

A common denominator for supporting the conference is support for the Prices and Incomes Accord. The accord makes the working class pay for the economic crisis. The Left supporters of the accord

deny this, saying that real wages will be maintained 'over time'. What time is not stated. However even this is inaccurate as the accord states that real wages will be maintained 'over time' but 'bargaining' on wages and hours will be 'based on achieving increased productivity'. In other words, no. increased productivity, no reduced hours and no increased wages. This is support for increased exploitation. The inefficiency of manufacturing in Australia is not the fault of the working class. According to the accord, if an industry is inefficient and does not achieve sufficient productivity, the workers must pay through no wage rises. Factories also close despite high productivity. This was the case in the car industry.

The Accord supports immigration controls. According to Marx, the working class have no country. These bureaucrats want to join the state, policing the working class along national lines. They therefore endorse state repression for ethnic communities. The accord opposes rises which close wage differentials. This includes between women and men. This is indeed a reactionary aspect of this disgraceful document. The Hawke government has effectively torn it up declaring that at least six percent unemployment will be maintained. Some of its initiatives have been sabotaged by the ruling class. For example, Medicare and tax reform. Yet despite Hawke's contempt, the bureaucrats remain loyal 'campaigning for its full implementation. They may as well piss in the wind.

The Broad Left Conference is not the poor, the exploited and working class people meeting to fight with an albeit inadequate program. It is a meeting of bureaucrats huddling to protect their privileged positions and the Hawke government is an embarrassment. They want to differentiate themselves but at the same time they know their political power is derived from supporting both it and the capitalist system. Therefore, they cannot fight Hawke. When Hawke boasts across the board support for his policies, he is right. This is true not just for the Clancy's and Carmichaels – but also from Norm Gallagher. The point is that not only do these bureaucrats have no programme when the working class, the exploited and the poor do fight back these bureaucrats will oppose them. Carmichael, Clancy and Hamilton are on the other side of the class line. This is a conference of treacherous bureaucrats trying to colour their betrayals with some identification with communism.

The Communist Left is not alone in attacking these bureaucrats. Their betrayals are too much for the Socialist Party of Australia who, in the seventies, were considered conservatives. Left wing groups such as the EWP, IS, Socialist Action, Spartacist League, SLL and the newly formed Communist League also strongly denounce the Accord and the bureaucrats. So denunciation is not enough. Why is it that the most right wing Labor government in Australia's history faces no serious opposition? Why is it that those who talked Left under Whitlam are meek and submissive under Hawke? The attacks on the working class are far more serious today than they were in 1973.

A look at the CPA over the years is quite revealing. In 1971 they were arguing that they were the only group not giving unconditional support to Labor. In 1976 they urged an anti-Fraser/anti-capitalist offensive. In 1983 they welcomed Hayden and advised his Centre Left faction not to frontally counterpose itself to Hawke. In the early seventies the CPA opposed wage indexation as a calculated attack on living standards. Today Denis Freney hails wage indexation as a great gain. In 1973 the CPA initiated the Workers' Control conference, the 'movement for the seventies'. Today all mention of workers' control has been forgotten. In 1974 the CPA supported open ended agreements in the AI as a matter of principle. Today closed ended agreements are a 'strategic gain'. All these changes in policy are part of the collapse before the ruling class offensive to place the burden of the economic

crisis on the back of the working class. Yesterday's CPA was radical but offered no revolutionary programme. Today it is a respectable party. Their right wing breakaway Socialist Forum is considered responsible by Quadrant magazine, voice of the extreme right.

The militancy of the seventies could not sustain the economic crisis. As profits began to fall trade union militancy became more difficult. The weaker sectors of the economy were attacked first. The Whitlam government reversed its reform programme and began the bosses offensive. This offensive was continued by Fraser. Australia has a weak manufacturing sector. Under the impact of the economic crisis there was a relative restructuring from the weaker manufacturing sector to the mining sector. The bureaucrats had no political answers but to beg to the government for money to "keep manufacturing in Australia" For this they were prepared to surrender trade union militancy. The crisis has swept away their fig leaves of militancy. Today their bourgeois politics stand naked.

During the seventies the working class was militant but politically it was tied to the capitalist system through the Labor Party. The radical Left cheered on this militancy whilst it refused to challenge its politics. At its founding conference the Socialist Labour League assured us that the strike wave in defence of Clarrie O'Shea was the turning point of Australian working class history. At best the radical Left counterposed its leadership but not revolutionary politics. This is true also of the Spartacist League and Bolshevik tendency who consider trade union struggles such as LaTrobe Valley power workers and QEB workers political struggles. There is a class line between revolutionary and reformist politics. Revolutionaries stand for the dictatorship of the proletariat. Reformists stand for the dictatorship of capital and the capitalist state. Of course the struggle for proletarian dictatorship must be related to political questions.

The Communist Left stands for diverting the working class from trade union struggle to revolutionary political struggle. We intervene in the day to day struggles to fight for a revolutionary perspective. We have learned from three years hard Hawke. How effectively he has used politics to tie the most privileged layers of the working class to the system and demobilise unionism. Those disillusioned have been given no alternative political expression. Providing a political alternative is the job of the Communist Left.

For this conference one group which is putting forward an alternative includes UP George Peterson, Frank Hardy of the CPA, Jim Percy of the SWP, former International Socialist Andrew Milner (And friends) and Bob Gould's group of ALPers with SLL sympathies. This group is proposing a fightback based on issues. However fighting back on issues avoids the question of politics. This is understandable as neither Hardy, McIlroy, Milner or Gould have broken from reformism themselves. Their call for the Australian government to intervene in Timor or Nuigini is reactionary. Australia would only intervene for imperialist purposes. Whilst we are prepared to unite with other tendencies for action we fight for an independent communist programme. We stand for a sliding scale of hours and wages; a republic; opposition to all immigration controls; self-determination for Black people; expropriation of capitalist industry; and a workers and small farmers government. Fighting the capitalist system means fighting the Hawke government means building the Communist Left. — Communist Left. PO Box 124 Kings Cross 2011