

COMMUNIST LEFT STATEMENT

(Written at the time of the 50th issue of RED)

Communist Left was formed in June 1976 by Owen Gager. It was formed in continuity with the record of New Zealand Spartacist League (which became Red Federation), Owen Gager's struggle within that grouping against Spartacist League US supporters B. Logan and A. Hannah (backed by the majority of Wellington Branch). Gager had the support of Auckland comrades, notably Bruce Jesson. Jesson was expelled for building the Republican Movement at the expense of Red Federation. It supported the 1970 Programme of the NZSL and Owen Gager's political record in Australia, mainly on East Timor and the 1976 Australian Constitutional crisis (the Kerr Coup). The first members were Bill Keats and Terry Millar who remained CPA members. Terry Millar was a member of NZSL and a comrade of O. Gager in New Zealand. A glazier, Paul Azzopardi joined shortly after.

The programme of the Communist Left, written in 1977 and published in 1978, firmly established the groups political basis. Key points include full support for Trotsky's founding of the fourth International but recognition that Fourth International was dead and none of the proclaimed continuers or reformers of it maintained in any way the continuity of the tradition as established by Trotsky. This includes the Mandeliste United Secretariat, the Healyite International Committee, those in solidarity with the Socialist Workers Party (of the US), the Morenoite and Posadasite variants and the International Spartacist Tendency. As communism is by definition internationalist, there is an urgent need for a fifth international.

Communist Left made many important interventions on the Australian left. Gager and Azzopardi intervened within the Labor Party. Keats and Millar within the Communist Party of Australia. There were also key political interventions on such issues as the colonial nature of Australian capitalism combined with its mini-imperialist domination of parts of SE Asia and the South Pacific, the crisis of manufacturing and subsequent unemployment, the nationalist crisis of Stalinism internationally leading to the third Indochina war (and the ostensible Trotskyist sell out to Stalinism). CL made practical interventions on issues such as unemployment and housing.

Communist Left supports the founding document of the Fourth International - The Transitional Programme. The aim of the Programme of the Communist Left is not to replace Trotsky's programme but to relate its method to a new period - the post-war boom, the expansion of stalinism, the degeneration of Trotskyism. The document sets out international principles and applies them to Australia.

Internationally CL/A was in solidarity with the NZSL which was re-established in 1978. This group became CLNZ in 1983. Discussions were also held with the Revolutionary Communist Party of Britain.

CL/A grew in size as a result of practical work in unemployment and housing (squatting). CL/A was party to a major squatting of the Glebe estate area of Sydney (October 1984) involving hundreds of people. This however led to the expulsion of founder leader Owen Gager due to his indiscipline. Gager refused to argue for tactics previously agreed to by Glebe squatter and declared war on the majority when they insisted he did so. He then pretended that he was CL and that the majority had "stolen" the organisation off him. He then constituted himself as Communist Left (Leninist) and now is actively part of the Melbourne Anarchist movement.

Until the end of 1987 CL did some important work in unemployment and housing. A bulletin

Communist was published. Interventions were made on a political level on issues such as the Hawke Government's Prices and Incomes Accord (the Accord) and the left responses such as Broad Left and Fightback. We remained involved in housing and unemployment as members of the Union of the Unemployed, the Squatters and Tenants (UUST)

Communist Left Australia split into fragments at the end of 1987. The majority supporting calling the police against their former comrades, giving the police names and addresses, totally unacceptable placing them outside the workers' movement. Communist Tendency was established to maintain continuity of the CL tradition. CL was re-established when two former members including Paul Azzopardi rejoined. Red has been published consistently as a quarterly since March 1988. The issue currently in preparation will be the fiftieth issue. Leaflets have also been issued. Communist Left has also published an unemployed bulletin called Unemployed Action

Communist Left broke off relations with Communist Left New Zealand when that grouping affiliated with the League for a Revolutionary Communist International (LRCI) whose leading section is the British group called Workers Power. We intervened to show that this was fundamentally an economist tendency, whose strategy was extending the trade union struggle into a general strike "posing the question of power". We pointed out that the question of power must not only be posed but resolved - through a revolutionary programme confronting the totality of state power. This LRCI consistently avoided. We also pointed out the consequence of this was adaptation to the existing political consciousness of the working class - their reformist chauvinist consciousness. We pointed out Workers Power attacked Benn primarily not as a chauvinist but because of his inconsistency in mobilising the rank and file. This blocs with workers who whilst being critical on a trade union outlook share his fundamental political perspective - a reformist chauvinist one. Workers Power pointed to many heart felt examples of organising against chauvinism. However these are not of strategic consequence to them in drawing class lines. Workers Power lines of struggle are organising workers on the shop floor against the bureaucracy and extending militancy. It is not drawing class lines which involve fighting for an interest independent of capitalist social relations - the capitalist state.

In New Zealand sections of the Workers Power leadership who were also leaders of the Communist Left of New Zealand split with other militants internationally to form the Liaison Committee of Militants for a Revolutionary Communist International. This did not constitute a fundamental break from Workers Power but argued, correctly that the current leadership were adapting to imperialist pressures. Whilst we agree with their criticisms, the totality of LRCI, from the beginning must be addressed. Since they haven't done so we can not reconsider re-establishing solidarity.