

WHITHER THE SOCIALIST LABOUR LEAGUE?

One Thousand issues of Workers' News Quite an achievement.

But unfortunately, even the SLL admits there is nothing to b proud of in much of its politics. The Socialist Labour League admit to being press agents of the bureaucratic degenerate clique of Gerry Mealy, even though they claim to have done so whilst maintaining continuity of the Fourth International. Breaking with Healyism is not merely expelling Mealy and his allies. Revisionism is caused by alien class influences. A full Marxist analysis of the class roots of this degeneration must be made.

How serious the SLL is about this was shown by the fact that during its public meetings commemorating 1,000 issues of Workers' News, none of the speakers even mentioned a change in line. This point was made from the floor by a speaker from the Communist Left, Any discussion on this was stonewalled by Nick Beams who said the forthcoming issue of Fourth International would contain the required analysis.

Does the issue of Fourth International entitled "How the Workers' Revolutionary Party Betrayed Trotskyism, 1973—1985" give a satisfactory Marxist analysis? We think not!

Fourth International considers the class basis of the Mealy clique to be the petty bourgeoisie. But what is not fully explained is how did this clique take over and in fact strangle what was, according to Fourth International, a thoroughly healthy proletarian party0 Fourth International has nothing but the highest praise for the early history of the SLL. In even the most healthy revolutionary organisation petty bourgeois tendencies develop. However the Mealy tendency did not merely develop, it strangled a whole party and a whole international without consistent opposition.

Fourth International begins its analysis of degeneration with inconsistencies in the struggle against the OCI and the hasty nature of the split. This is simply not good enough. Fourth International attacks the Charter of Basic Rights as revisionist and rightly so0 But the date of this document is December 1970. For such a revisionist document to become party policy, degeneration must have occurred well before, Yet Fourth International has nothing but praise for the SLL of the sixties.

The analysis of the Communist Left is considerably deeper. We see the class basis of Healyite degeneration as being the labour aristocracy. The Marxist analysis of labour aristocracy was made by Lenin as part of his analysis of imperialism0 Lenin argued that whilst the main beneficiary of imperialist super exploitation is of course the bourgeoisie, sections of the working class benefit also, He called this section the labour aristocracy, However the category labour aristocracy is not so much an economic category as a political one, What is of fundamental importance is the political allegiance of large sections of the working class in Britain and in other imperial powers to the imperialist state even though the material benefit may often be minimal, The main agency for this reconciliation is the so—called social democratic or Labour parties. In his article, The Austrian Crisis and Communism, Trotsky pointed out that these were more aptly called social imperialist, At various stages, Trotsky advocated entry into social imperialist parties, To enter or not to enter a social imperialist is a question of circumstances. The Communist Left does not have sufficient information on Britain in the forties and the politics of its working class to determine the correctness or other—wise of the Healy clique joining the Labour Party. We do know that Jock Haston's opposition was

based on economism, i.e., the growing trade union struggle. We therefore in no way bloc with Haston, However whether one is inside or outside the Labour Party there is always a political line between Marxists and social imperialists. Marxists stand for the dictatorship of the proletariat, Social Imperialists stand for the imperialist state, Our criticism of Mealy is not for entering the Labour Party as an organisation but for liquidation into reformist politics. The Communist Left has limited information on Healy's record, But from what information we have, Healy's liquidation is clear. "The Newsletter" called for the struggle for socialist policies within the Labour Party and trade unions, But what are socialist policies? Tony Benn thinks He's a socialist. He has even been known to support nationalisation, The expression 'socialist policies' liquidates the distinction between the dictatorship of the In his book, "Stalinism in Britain", Robert Black (Robin Buck) makes it crystal clear what the SLL perspective was. He was polemicising against a Stalinist Betty Reid, He was writing with the full authority of the SLL. He says as follows: "We did not call, for 'socialism now' but for action against Wilson or the part of those who claim to oppose his policies0 We began that preparation with the demand for Labour to take power on the basis of a socialist programme. The next stage was to make the demand 'make the "left" MP's fight.' (p. 326). At every stage, the class line between Marxism and reformism is liquidated. It is not the task of revolutionaries to demand the parliamentary road to socialism even from the point of view of exposure0 It is the task of revolutionaries to show that the only government that can serve the working class is one based on soviet power by smashing the capitalist state.

It is not the task of revolutionaries to pressure left MP's to make them fight, albeit to expose them. Incidentally, who did the SLL consider left? Demands can, in some circumstances, be placed on the existing leadership of the working class but the demands are to mobilise the working class to take power, i.e. smash the capitalist state, They are not to be pressured into using parliament for the benefit of the working class.

Black also argues that a struggle to defend the trade unions against the State is inherently a political struggle. This is fundamentally wrong. Trotsky makes it clear in his writing, "A Third Period of Comintern Errors", that strikes etc only become political when the working class are fighting for clear political demands, The Newsletter also said in its October 1960 issue: "Labour Rejects H—Bomb", "Wilson, Cousins take over arms industry", "Nationalise defence industries, says Wilson", "Trotskyists have opposed the manufacture of the H— bomb and were responsible for the resolution on unilateralism at Brighton." This is both reformism and pacifism. Only Revolution can stop nuclear war. We challenge the Socialist Labor League to show any issue of Newsletter which fought for revolutionary politics as opposed to Labourite politics at all, The pacifist nature of the SLL anti— H Bomb campaign is not changed by Labour Reviews statement: "If we take as a whole the fight on the industrial front with the massive campaign against the manufacture of the H Bomb, all roads lead to a common objective, the need to replace capitalism with socialism. The next step being the overthrow of this Tory Government and its replacement with a Labour government pledged to socialist policies." Labour Review, March/April 1958, editorial cited Black, Thjs incredible statement jumbles up economism with pacifism and a two stage theory of revolution. We agree with "Fourth International" that a few mistakes or flaws do not mean a revisionist tendency0 But it is hard to find anything in the early SLL publications that is orthodox Trotakism. The whole revolutionary content of the Transitional Programme has been abandoned for Labour governments pledged to socialist policies, nationalisation and making the Left MP's fight. Fourth International appears horrified that the formation of the Workers' Revolutionary Party was dedicated to the election of a Labour

government with a socialist programme. However this was nothing new in the history of the Socialist Labour League, Thuggery, sexism and adaption to imperialism on Ireland are all consistent with a labour aristocratic tendency. Adapting to the labour aristocracy and betrayal of the political independence of the working class by adapting to the Labour Party and therefore to British imperialism is as serious a betrayal as supporting Khomeini, Qaddafi and Baath Socialist Party of Iraq, Betrayals which Fourth International does attack. An honest account of Healyite degeneration would confront Healy's role in the Labour Party, even an account which considered his role principled and orthodox, We feel that this omission by Fourth International is deliberate, To analyse this role would expose the authority of the so-called International Committee, The ICFI therefore choose to cover up his role and therefore give it orthodox credentials, This can only force the ICFI, including the SLL, to the right as they take up the old Healyite Labour Party demands in order to establish their continuity with this fundamentally rotten tradition. A complete break from Healyism requires a Marxist analysis. Both the ICFI and the Communist League are yet to give one. We suggest you study the revolutionary programme of the Communist Left,

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