

#35 October 1996

August Canberra rally and the Howard horror Budget

3 US bombs Iraq again

4 New Zealand elections 5

War against the Black bureaucracy

From Socialist Labour League to Socialist Equality Party

Indonesia. Towards explosion!

On the twenty seventh of July, rioting broke out in Jakarta. Officially it was described as a factional dispute within a minor party. The party concerned being the PDI, a liberal bourgeois party of the Indonesian bourgeoisie. The riot took place after supporters of Soejardi, the officially recognised “leader” brought in the police to defend party headquarters against the opposing faction led by Megawati Sukarnopurti. It is Megawati who the democratic bourgeoisie really recognise as their leader. Suharto believes in opposition parties on one condition — that his junta control the leadership. Soejardi is effectively a Suharto appointee. Understandably PDI membership were angry. The result being riots in the streets, physical clashes with troops and buildings being burnt down.

In its subsequent “investigation” into the events the spectre of communism was raised. Suharto has blamed the events on the far more radical Democratic Peoples Party [PRDJ. This party was accused of being “insurgent” “using the language of communism” “lines of thought resemble the outlawed PKI [Indonesian Communist Party] etc. It is illegal. Leading members are imprisoned and face the death penalty if convicted. Although it is careful not to come out as fully communist (given the intensity of state repression> thousands workers of Indonesia are looking to it, as a party of liberation.

Unfortunately it is not a real communist party. Communism means proletarian dictatorship. This means that working people must win sections of the middle classes (such as the peasantry) to its leadership on working class terms. It is not merely a question of aligning classes “for democracy” even if it is recognised the undemocratic position of workers on the factory floor. Students, when fighting against repression often do so in the context of defending their privilege at the expense of workers and other exploited and oppressed. This is so even if their immediate demands are supportable. Small farmers have the privilege of owning land.

There is indeed the spectre of communism over Indonesia. The emergence of the PRD is significant. PAD see the working class as playing the leading role in the fight for democracy in Indonesia. The PAD see the struggle as an alliance between workers fighting for democracy with students fighting for democracy and with peasants struggles. This is a defective strategy. PRD want to fudge over the fundamental principled distinction between bourgeois democracy — a form of exploiting class dictatorship and proletarian state power. Revolutionary communists support democratic demands. We do so to sharpen class struggle and to expose that capitalist society is a bourgeois dictatorship. Bourgeois democracy is the most progressive form of dictatorship of the bourgeoisie because it allows every right — except the right not to be exploited. We do not raise bourgeois democratic demands to reinforce the “democratic” bourgeoisie. On the contrary we want to expose them.

In this context it is the worst possible mistake for a workers political organisation to surrender their banner and be subordinated to a bourgeois political party or a political bloc where the bourgeoisie are in the leadership — a popular front. This was Stalin's strategy. Communists would abandon their struggle for proletarian power to be part of a front for national liberation on the basis of immediate democratic demands. This strategy was applied by the Maoists in semicolonial and colonial countries — including Indonesia. In Indonesia it had devastating consequences. Millions were killed and murdered in 1965 by the Sukarno regime. Those killed included militant workers and peasants, Chinese — and of course millions of members of the Indonesian Communist Party PKI. The Maoists, of course, have learnt nothing. They would go through the whole bloody experience again.

How much the Indonesian left has learnt can be shown by their support for Megawati. She is the daughter of President Sukarno. Sukarno has an enlightened image for the nationalist bourgeoisie. He is the symbol of Indonesia's independent statehood. The 1965 military crackdown showed his bloody antagonism towards the working class. She stands behind his tradition. She represents the more enlightened section of the bourgeoisie. It is more enlightened because they know that putting all their eggs in the Suharto basket could be disastrous. Megawati represents an insurance policy for the bourgeoisie. She intends to play precisely the same role as Aquino did in the Philippines. The Megawati strategy is by showing an apparent strong bourgeois opposition to the Suharto, a threat or potential threat to bourgeois property can be curtailed. She wants to see that it is the bourgeoisie that are seen as the vanguard of the struggle for democratic rights and against Suharto.

Whether she can succeed is very much up to the Indonesian left. She must be defended from the Junta if imprisoned. The independence of the PDI from Junta control must be defended also. But in no way can workers parties politically identify with the PDI. This party and Megawati must be fully exposed as opponents of the working class. In no way can the Megawati campaign be given any support.

Unfortunately the PRD gives critical support to Megawati. This is justified in two main different ways. Some say it is necessary to relate to the masses rallying behind her banner. Others believe in the Eurocommunist thesis of a plurality of left parties which all cooperate. Both "arguments" show that the PRD have learned nothing from 1965. The latter argument is tantamount to abandoning the struggle for working class power. The only way such an alliance could be cemented is if revolutionists bury such fundamental questions as class principle and the overthrow of the system.

Even "tactical" support for Megawati reinforces the democratic credential of the bourgeoisie in the eyes of workers. It also shows that the vanguard is weak, subordinate to the system. This does not "win alliances" with peasants and other sections of the middle class. On the contrary: the middle class will only take the working class seriously if it fights for power. Of course we must raise democratic demands which show that we can resolve important questions such as debts to banks and democratic rights in general. But these must be fought for in the context of fighting for working class power.

Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution is well and truly relevant for Indonesia today. About fifteen years ago it appeared to some that Permanent Revolution was a sectarian error. In Vietnam, the National Liberation Front were victorious on the basis of the Stalinist strategy. In Nicaragua, the Sandinistas were victorious and liberated Nicaragua from imperialism. Well now the bureaucratic deformations within Vietnam are well and truly exposed. The Nicaraguan revolution has been

defeated not by military invasion, but by the local bourgeoisie who were allowed to continue exploiting after the revolution. Some of the bourgeois forces such as Violetta Chamorra were initially part of the Sandinista Front. Nonproletarian forces can, under some circumstances, liberate a country from imperialism or even from capitalism. But they cannot establish proletarian dictatorship. They can only establish, at best, a bureaucratically deformed revolution. At worst they can declare war on the proletariat and hand the country back to imperialism. Relying on non-proletarian forces is suicide.

A revolution would of course liberate millions of Indonesian workers from superexploitation, impoverishment and the tyranny of a brutal military dictatorship. It would liberate national minorities such as Moluccans and Timorese. It would free the peasants from the tyranny. Such a revolution would also have massive ramifications internationally. It would inspire workers throughout South East Asia and the Pacific — including Australia.

Indonesian workers remember the support and solidarity given from the Australian waterfront given when they were fighting for independence, it was a vital ingredient in their struggle. With revolutionary leadership it could become a vital ingredient in the struggle for the liberation of the Indonesian working class.

The August 19 ACTU Canberra rally and the Howard horror Budget

As is well known, tens of thousands of Australian workers assembled in Canberra to show their anger. Correctly they were predicting that the Howard Budget would be a shocker. Workers were already angry about Senator Reith's Industrial Relations Bill. When they marched up to Capital Hill they were disciplined and angry. But their politics lagged behind their organisation. Howard's attacks were described as "unAustralian". This is both chauvinist and shows faith in the local exploiting class. In fact our local bourgeoisie have a long record of vicious attacks. Police attacked one contingent only — the Black contingent — which marched from the Aboriginal Embassy outside old Parliament House. What the bureaucrats had in mind was a sort of glorified picnic where workers would show their anger but lead nowhere. Certainly they had no intention of threatening the system. Their promise for further action were deliberately vague.

Effectively what the bureaucrats did was reinforce workers' faith in the Democrats, Greens and Senator Brian Harridine. Workers left the rally reassured that these reactionary forces will stop the Liberals in the Senate. In no way were they challenged by the organisers. Nor do they allow an alternative point of view. The platform was closed to prevent revolutionaries presenting a way forward to fight this government.

This rally has become notorious because of events which occurred within Parliament House, a good three hundred meters from the main platform. Actions by some unionists, Blacks and students have become known as the Parliament House riot. Most people at the rally didn't know what was going on. Understandable some of those present wanted more than just a tame picnic and letting off steam. People who are hurt by Howard's vicious measures are going to strike back. They are fully justified in doing so.

Those who condemn "violence" should consider just how much damage will be done to pensioners who will no longer be able to afford dental health or by Department of Housing tenants being forced

to pay market rent. This Budget can only be beaten by direct action. Of course it can be said that those who rioted had no perspective of mobilisation for mobilising the working class. But the alternative posed by the Government and bureaucrats is no action at all. Communist Left wants to generalise this anger throughout the working class so we can have a united offensive both the Budget and all Howard's attacks. On this basis we can bring down the Howard government.

The response to the riot has been condemnation by the ruling class that it is "unAustralian". This condemnation is one sided. There is no comment regarding the cop harassment of the Black marchers. It is forgotten that the vandalism occurred — after a baton charge by coppers!. The ruling class have every interest in ensuring that workers don't fight Howard's attacks. What is sickening but not surprising has been the condemnation from the trade union bureaucracy.

Bureaucrat after bureaucrat, including Jenny George, Wendy Caird and Peter Barrack has stood up to denounce the violence. There has been talk of disowning any union official charged. Basically, the bureaucrats are on their knees. John Howard is no doubt lapping this up. He has got the bureaucrats to police union militants. He can pressure them to ensure that rallies are peaceful so there will be no working class direct action. The bureaucrats are at pains to show their loyalty to "law and order" In their pursuit of respectability they will no doubt ensure that "the conditions where such anger would erupt wont occur again". Perhaps, with any luck, (for Howard) there wont be any rallies at all.

The reaction to the rally has once again raised the spectre of redbaiting. Whereas in the fifties, the call was to purge communists. Today there is the threat of purging "thugs, Anarchists and Trotskyites". Communists these days are respectable members of the popular front. Also no one wants to remember the militant tradition of communism as officially it is dead. But the campaign against "thugs, Anarchists and Trotskyites" will have precisely the same effect.

We must not let the bureaucrats get away with it. The Howard Budget is the aggressor which will cause millions of dollars worth of suffering to poor people. It will deprive people of health (through massive cuts to Medicare) jobs, the dole, the right to an education, the right to an adequate legal defence (cuts to legal aid). It is especially vicious against Black people, students and the unemployed.

If measures are implemented almost 170,000 will be deprived of their right to the dole. This will include the twenty thousand Telstra workers who face dismissal even though Telstra makes record profits. The penalties for "breaches of the work test have been viciously increased. As a result some unemployed may go hungry or end up homeless.

There are economic pressures on Howard from the ruling class to increase profitability. But much of the basis is political. Howard is putting the boot into Labor and supporters who have been exposed as politically weak. He is also pandering to a certain chauvinism amongst his support in the middle class and labour aristocracy. These want to flaunt their privileges and are happy to see unemployed and migrants hurt.

Howard is merely continuing the ruling class offensive begun by Labor. Of course he is doing this more viciously than Labor would. It is pretty sickening (but not surprising) that even though the campaign is vicious, Labor leader Beazley is almost silent. The reason is, of course, that in no way is he prepared to make any promises that Labor would reverse the attacks.

Labor is in a position of offering nothing to no one. It was Labor who began the economic rationalist offensive and privatised virtually everything except Teistra. It was Labor who began the attacks on CES and AUSTUDY. Beazley can say “tut tut” and point to Howard’s excesses. But Beazley offers no alternative political direction.

The ruling class offensive will continue because the workers movement has shown that it is politically weak. If our so called “representatives” continue to apologise for August 19 “riot” we will be exposed as even weaker. The bureaucrats have shown that not only will they not fight, anyone who does will be dobbed in and sold out. Workers can not rely on Labor to lead the fight back.

US bombs Iraq again

There is a Presidential election coming up in the USA. Bill Clinton has shown that he is not a wimp is not a wimp. He has “abolished welfare as we know it” Which means extreme poverty homeless and hunger for many thousands previously dependent on it. This has pleased the Republican candidate Dole. Dole accuses Clinton of being a bit of a Johnny come lately. After all he has opposed welfare for a long time. But he is glad that Clinton has joined the bandwagon.

President Clinton has recently shown that he is no slouch on foreign policy either. To show that he is not prepared to allow the USA to be pushed around, he has ordered the airforce to bomb Iraq. The Bush invasion had Clinton’s fullest support. This mobilises similar chauvinist support that was galvanised when Bush bombed Iraq because of invasion of Kuwait. Dole is happy that Clinton accepts America’s role as World policeman. But he thinks Clinton should go even further and remove Saddam Husein totally.

Last time the rationalisation for war was Saddam Hussein’s invasion of Kuwait. Kuwait is an artificial statelet established to guarantee imperialist control over oil supplies. This time the rationalisation is that Saddam Husein attacks the Kurdish people in their zone of autonomy. This is a clever and sly move. The Kurds are an oppressed people. Here we have US forces apparently acting in solidarity with the oppressed. No doubt so former left critics will come to the party and rationalise their acceptance of the US war machine.

In reality this is a cynical ruse. US imperialism doesn’t really “care about the Kurds”. What it does care about is it’s “divine right” to exploit the Middle East. Saddam Hussein must be pulled into line lest he might become a threat to American plunder. Unlike the Kuwaiti’s, the Kurds are a real nationality. They are torn between three countries. Iraq, Iran and Turkey. None of these countries recognises their democratic right to even speak their own language — let alone to a national independence should they choose it. Iran has attacked the Kurds. Turkey has attacked the Kurds. US only picks on Iraq for its cynical reasons of enforcing world plunder by the terror of the B52,

The USA is party to agreements which recognise the current boundaries in the Middle East. These agreements recognise that Turkey, Iran and Iraq control the area occupied by the Kurdish people. Clinton has no intention of changing this. What he is saying is that the USA has the right to police Iraq even within its own boundaries. USA can go anywhere but Iraq is not allowed to fly military aircraft even within their own boundaries — that is Clinton’s message. Clinton is cynically using the “rights of the Kurds” to rationalise their “right” to control and dominate the people of the Middle East. That is the real point of the bombing raids.

Once again the US imperialists have a loyal ally in plunder — Australia. Both the right wing Howard Government and the Labor “opposition” have given their support for Clinton’s bloody exercises. They did this for the last Gulf war also. In fact they even sent troops. Working class action against all imperialist presence in the Middle East is urgently required.

New Zealand elections

New Zealand holds its national elections in October. This coming election will be different because it will be held under the new system known as MMP. MMP allows those parties who score a certain percentage of the vote nationally greater than five percent to be represented in Parliament. On the electorate system they wouldn’t get a seat. After this election groupings who have generalised minority support will be able to exert more influence.

The options posed for New Zealanders, by the major parties, are unfortunately very grim indeed. It is unlikely that hard right economic agenda will be challenged. And if it is, the alternative will be New Zealand chauvinism and reactionary protectionism.

The “alternatives” are as follows; The National Party which is the party of government. They are of course New Zealand’s Liberals. They are the main party of the comprador bourgeoisie who rule colonial New Zealand. They have continued an extremely right wing economic rationalist agenda which was begun by the previous Labour Government. Their Employment Contracts Act has virtually no place for unions in the industrial agenda at all.

Labour is as in Australia, the party founded by the trade union movement. During it’s last stint in government it carried out a rabid campaign of privatisation and union smashing. They were so rabidly right wing that someone once said that their Finance Minister Roger Douglas ‘made Margaret Thatcher seem like a wimp.’ Politically, they appeared to take a progressive stand by banning nuclear powered shipping. This angered America. But Labour showed it could help imperialism in other ways such as supporting the coup in Fiji against the democratic government by Colonel Rambuka. Labour has not abandoned hard right economic policies but has softened it’s approach. Their leader Helen Clark gives these a feminist image. Labour appeals to some sections of the labour bureaucracy and of the middle classes. Understandably working people have been deserting in droves. Labour deserves absolutely no electoral support. Currently Labour support is estimated at 19% of the vote.

The Alliance is a popular front. Or rather a liquidationist block. It was formed by the protectionist breakaway from Labour known as New Labour formed by Jim Anderton MP for Sydenham (Christchurch). Part of the Alliance are Greens, NZ Democrats (formerly Social Credit) and the radical Maori Manu Matuhaki. All have liquidated their

identities for immediate practical demands. The Democrats are a reactionary bourgeois party who once believed in state control of banking. They represent a guarantee to the ruling classes that the Alliance will keep workers firmly chained to the system. Anyhow the politics of the NLP and Greens are thoroughly reactionary also. The NLP protectionism divides NZ workers from their class comrades internationally as well as giving money to backward bosses. The Alliance represents the radical wing of the middle class understandable alienated by Labour’s right turn.

The second most popular party at the moment is New Zealand First, led by former National Party golden boy Winston Peters. Winston Peters split from the Nationals, nostalgic for yesterday's policies of Piggy Muldoon. Muldoon "think big" believed in grand schemes for public works to develop New Zealand. He was antiworking class but not economic rationalist. Under the impact of the crisis, these have been abandoned. Peters has since discovered the nationalist petty bourgeoisie. New Zealand First and Alliance believe in a strong economically independent capitalist New Zealand. Where they differ is that NZ First realise that this is only possible with reactionary anti union policies state repression and reactionary social policies. NZ First is currently promoting a racist campaign against Asian immigrants. New Zealand does not have nearly the same proportion of Asian migrants as Australia. Yet reactionaries have discovered an "Asian invasion". Since the NZ First campaign begun there has been an increase in threats, including death threats, against Asians in Auckland. NZ First also believe in law and order and attacking welfare recipients especially single parents.

Another party which could win seats is known as ACT New Zealand. ACT was formed by former Labour Finance minister Roger Douglas. Douglas split Labour considering that his vision for the future cutting back the public sector to the bone — has been betrayed. He even thinks National is a bit too big spending. Douglas has the knack of putting hard economic rationalism in the language of social concern "breaking down dependence on the state" "promoting individual choice" (etc). If Douglas has his way. There would only be one tax — a GST. People would be forced to save for their old age!. Trade union awards are "privileges" (even minimal ones!). There would be no dole after three months! ACT does not have a strong social base as ruling class people prefer National and middle class people are more socially (as opposed to economically) reactionary go for NZ First or Christian Coalition. ACT is not strong promoter of racism and Christian morality. Nevertheless, this is a dangerous pressure grouping for economic rationalism on both Nationals and Labour. ACT will be pushing them to cut spending even further.

There is also a Christian Coalition who, as the name suggests, represent the Christian right. They promote a Puritan morality. This reactionary party has about five percent support across the country. If it wins a seat under MMP it will certainly cooperate with National.

This is the first MMP election. Under this new system parties get seats by winning an electorate. But they also win seats by scoring a proportion of the seats nationally. The minimum proportion being five percent. So there is all sorts of wheeling and dealing and therefore heaps of compromises as parties manoeuvre to get a majority. National are for the moment, in the lead. But should NZ First, Labour and Alliance get together they could form quite a reactionary bloc. Should agree to a compromise programme National could be beaten. Labour does not believe in the Employment Contract Act. It is currently negotiating with NZ First who believe in it but want amendments. Labour is strongly economic rationalist who have campaigned against NZ First and Alliance economic nationalism and commitment to relatively high government spending.

The main parties are asking workers to choose their variant of capitalist poison. This is no choice. Many workers will want to know why is it that the Nationals have so much control and why the main apparent alternative is NZ First? The answer lies in the class

collaboration of both the Labour and breakaway New Labour. Important lessons can be drawn as to why Labour adopted hard line monetarist policies and just why NLP could not challenge it this without selling out to the petty bourgeoisie.

It is the task of revolutionaries to draw out the lessons to explain to workers why a revolutionary alternative. To merely call for unity, or to bemoan its absence betrays the struggle against the alien class forces which both Labour and New Labour adapt to. A Labour/Alliance Government would be a popular front government committed to attacking the working class. Unfortunately this is what some ostensibly revolutionary Trotskyists (Communist Workers Organisation and Workers Power) are calling for. Whilst it would be not unprincipled under some circumstances to demand worker supporters to expel alien class elements and break the Alliance. We do not think the working class strength of either Labour or New Labour warrants the demand.

What is needed is a new workers party committed to consistent class principle. Critical support can be given to any minor parties to the working class who oppose all class collaboration and collaboration with the Government and call for power to a government, not based on parliament but on independent working class organisation. The building of a revolutionary communist party is an urgent task for the New Zealand working class.

War against the Black bureaucracy

There is a racist offensive in Australia. Pauline Hanson declares that represents all her electorate “except Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders” and she has a belief in the Asian invasion. Howard ‘defends’ her by claiming that accusations of racism against her are “political correctness”. Being “politically correct” is far greater sin, in Howard’s book than spreading hatred against Black people. In reality Howard is very pleased with Hanson’s efforts. Howard is gaining and maintaining support by appealing to chauvinism of mainstream Australia — the petty bourgeoisie and the labour aristocracy. Hanson is the vanguard of the offensive, she is creating the political environment so that further attacks are publicly acceptable. Multinational capital will be a winner as the amount of compensation it will be forced to pay for land occupied by Black people will (they hope) be next to nothing. Mabo doesn’t give Blacks much. But it does delay developers with court cases.

What is under attack are the minor gains of the Black mini revolution which occurred in the late sixties and early seventies. This occurred in parallel with, and was partly inspired by the Black upsurge in the USA (the Black Panthers). Of course it has shown the political limitations of this movement, which despite proclaiming hostility, and even armed struggle, remained within the system. The highlights of this were The Gurindji Tribe occupation of Wave Hill station, which they proclaimed as under Black control. Wattle Creek, leased for peanuts to the British cattle investor Lord Vestey. Black workers had been forced to work sun up to sun down for \$6 per week. They were backed by the Waterside Workers Federation.

The referendum of 1967. For the first time, the Federal Government legislated about aboriginal Affairs which was previously the prerogative of the State governments.

The struggle on Palm Island against incorporation into the Townsville, and against the island being turned into a tourist resort.

The Black tent Embassy outside Parliament house Canberra which was brutally attacked by police, it was at the embassy that the Aboriginal flag, now World famous was launched.

The struggle to establish the Black housing company in Redfern. Black activists backed by the New South Wales Builders Labourers Federation united in action so a Black community could be established in Redfern

The struggle against the racist Queensland Acts and the frameup of left-wing activists Denis Walker, Lionel Lacy and John Garcia.

The Black moratorium and land rights struggles which took place.

From this, the Black movement emerged as a militant force which could influence governments. As course they had the backing of militant unions and the radical left.

The gains of all this amounted to a limited degree of control over land occupied. The other major gains amount to the creation of Black quangos. Quasi-government institutions which on one hand serve and represent the Black people yet are funded by and serve the system. Often they play a role of policing Blacks. These include the Aboriginal Legal Service, the Aboriginal Medical Service, The Aboriginal housing Co-operative and ATSIC.

These institutions ensured the establishment of a Black bureaucratic elite. As they are defined by the system, they operate on it's terms. The Federal Government funds the bureaucrats so they are limited in their capacity to go outside it's framework. They also police the law. It took a massive campaign to stop the Black housing Company moving the residents of Everleigh Street. This campaign showed how little control the community had over their own Company supposedly set up to represent them. The Company had done no repairs and had deliberately allowed the houses to run down to force tenants out. In this way it has behaved like any other landlord

Black bureaucrats administer work for the dole schemes where Black workers are paid their Social Security benefits for hard labouring work.

These institutions have not qualitatively changed the position of Black people. They still face discrimination, legal repression, poverty, a far greater rate of imprisonment, a far greater rate of unemployment and a significantly lower life expectancy. Their land "rights" are subject to the whim of Government who are directly or indirectly under the control of mining companies. Any talk of "reconciliation"

In no way is there the political or material basis for national equality. It certainly will not be achieved by Mabo which only allows a small minority of Black people any right to any land at all. Black people may raise their flag. but virtually everything else is under the control of the White, racist, capitalist state

There is now a racist offensive. Howard was elected with overt racist support. He is in a good position to roll back any minimal gains made by Black people at all. Of course, he can point to bureaucratic inefficiency, real or imagined corruption and the fact that token measures offer no real solution — to justify Blacks receiving no funding at all.

This racist offensive is in no way accidental. There is economic restructuring of the Australian economy away from manufacturing towards mining tourism and primary production. In no way will multinationals allow Black people to interfere with their superprofits

It is imperative that we fight this attack on funding. But in doing so we should in no way pretend that Qangos are a satisfactory solution to the Black question.

These institutions must be placed under full Black working class control. Black self-determination must be defined, not in terms of token land rights but the right to a nationality. The material basis for a separate independent nation of Black people exists. There is considerable land occupied by black people which could be united. An independent economy, as independent as can be established under capitalism, could be established. Much of the land would be rich in minerals. Black people also occupy some excellent agricultural land.

Black people will only be liberated when we have overthrown capitalism. Overthrowing capitalism requires a united struggle. Black and white need to unite but are divided by racism. The issue of Black self determination is a fundamental question for the establishment of a class conscious working class in this country.

From the Socialist Labour League to the Socialist Equality Party

This month a new left wing political party was launched. With public meetings in Newcastle, Wollongong, Melbourne, Brisbane and Sydney. It is to be known as the Socialist Equality Party. We can only agree that the profit system offers no future for working people. We also agree that the policies of all bourgeois parties, whether Labor, Liberal Democrat or Green are dictated by the profit system. We also agree that working class people are deeply alienated from the existing social structure and a new alternative is desperately needed.

So is the Socialist Equality Party the answer? Unfortunately we have to say no. The Socialist Equality Party has a history. This they acknowledge in their pamphlet A new party for the working class. Statement of the Socialist Equality Party. We quote this pamphlet as follows:

The formation of the Socialist Equality Party is the culmination of a 24 year struggle waged by the Socialist Labour League since its founding in 1972 to establish the political independence of the working class and the fight for international socialism.

Our movement has waged an unrelenting struggle against Laborism, Stalinism and all bureaucracies within the workers movement. It has an unequalled record in defending the working class. It has provided a Marxist analysis of the vital political social and historical questions both nationally and internationally.”

This sounds very impressive. But fundamentally it is not true. They know full well that from 1972 to 1985 they were press agents for Gerry Healy. They also know Healy’s record which they faithfully parroted in Workers News. They gave full support to the reactionary regime of Ayatollah Khomeini. They supported the Palestinian people “under the leadership of the PLO” They supported the Baathists of Iraq (justifying the murder of Stalinists by Hussein) and the Qaddafi leadership in Libya. All these bourgeois regimes were uncritically hailed by Workers News. There was no serious factional opposition from leaders of the SLL when these betrayals occurred.

They claim to have fought labourism. Why was it that their main slogan was for a Labor Government pledged to socialist policies? In no way was political power posed independently of the bourgeois state. In 1988, after the break from Healy they demanded the “lefts” (their inverted commas) expel

the right wing from the Labor Party. In other words they would have had faith in a Labour Government with left leadership.

‘But what about our principled struggle for the Fourth International against Healyite opportunism?’ Is no doubt how SEP members would respond to this. Yes! What about it. Healy was expelled by the Workers Revolutionary Party of Britain not for bourgeois nationalist and bureaucratic deviations but for his alleged sexual abuses of cadre. They have produced no documentary record of any serious factional struggle around these vital international questions.

There is some record of disagreement over the question of East Timor. Michael Banda imposed his “analysis” that Indonesia is one nation and the East Timorese national struggle deserved no support. The Workers News fell into line, faithfully reprinted the line of Banda. They were seen, quite correctly, as stabbing the Timorese movement in the back. Incidentally, why weren’t the SLL given significant support from this “Proletarian international?”. Where was the struggle of the Workers League leaders who now lead the ICFI?

The record of the SLL has been one massive cover-up. There has been no serious Marxist analysis of Healyism. David North of the US Workers League, has written a massive book “The Heritage We Defend”. North refuses to confront Healy’s rotten role in the Labour Party where he supported Nye Bevan. He also denies that there is a material basis for Healyite revisionism. Apparently there is only a national one — a break down in internationalism. How North can argue, on one hand that the ICFI is in continuity with Trotsky’s Fourth International and on the other that during this continuity sections of the “Fourth International “ acted as PR agents for bourgeois regimes is astounding. To argue that such major deviations occurred without material, class degeneration is simply a negation of Marxism.

The SEP claim that the SLL consistently fought bureaucratism. We suggest they investigate their own!. We also point out their major failure to fight Healy’s. Unless a total break is made through a Marxist analysis, the SEP are merely continuing the same rotten SLL tradition. We think that they have at least the obligation to be honest in explaining to workers that they promoted the politics of Healy even if it can be justified in terms of revolutionary continuity. The fact is that gross bureaucratism occurred without serious opposition from either the past or current leadership of the SLL now SEP.

Communist Left P.O Box 119 Erskineville 2043 Australia