

PROLETARIAN REVOLUTION



Re-Create
the Fourth International

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Lessons From Cincinnati Rebellion Against Police Terror

by Matthew Richardson

The social ingredients are all there . . . In every major city is economic and social despair, mixed with a militaristic police force that targets Black life and liberty. In every such city are Black politicians who function in the role of keeping the restless natives in check; keep them suffering in silence. . . . Cincinnati is a harbinger of things to come. Cincinnati is the fire next time.

— Mumia Abu-Jamal, journalist and political prisoner

The murder of an unarmed 19-year-old Black man, Timothy Thomas, by a white cop in Cincinnati sparked the biggest urban uprising in the U.S. since Los Angeles in 1992. Thousands of Black people, overwhelmingly working-class youth, rejected their self-appointed leaders' calls for peace and took to the streets to challenge police brutality and decades of racism and poverty.

Indeed, Cincinnati's rebellion stands out as significant, not just because of the extent to which it targeted the ruling class's seats of power but also because of its explicit and overwhelming rejection of the established "community" leadership of politicians and preachers. But because there was no alternative leadership, the rebellion degenerated; many senseless acts of misdirected violence occurred, and the uprising was eventually squelched by a massive police crackdown. The radical political lessons taught by the rebellion should be understood by all fighters against racism and for justice, in Cincinnati and across the country.

"PEACEFUL" PROTEST REJECTED

Thomas was shot April 7 in the largely Black Over-the-Rhine neighborhood while running from officer Steven Roach, who was chasing him because of twelve misdemeanor violations — mostly traffic fines like driving while not wearing a seat belt. He was the fifteenth Black man killed by Cincinnati cops since 1995; the fourth in less than six months. No cop has been convicted for these earlier murders; only one was even indicted.

After each atrocity, the politicians and media united behind the cops to claim that the killing was justified. Black community leaders would appeal for calm and advocate hopeless reforms; soon it would be back to business as usual. But the Black community's outrage in

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LRP/COFI Report

In the first half of 2001, the LRP has continued to slowly but steadily recruit new members. We have survived years of only very occasional recruitment — a situation essentially forced on us by the conditions of retreating struggles and growing cynicism that dominated the class struggle in the U.S. The recent experience of being consistently in the process of developing new members, if few in number, has added new energy and enthusiasm into our ranks. It has strengthened our ongoing union work and enabled us to participate in a broader range of struggles than we have previously been able to be active in.

NEW YORK LRP

In the Transport Workers' Union (TWU) Local 100, we are publishing a regular bulletin, *Revolutionary Transit Worker*, which has been issued in thousands of copies at union meetings and rallies. The bulletin has proved very popular, and a growing number of transit workers now subscribe. See the article on page 32 on our involvement in struggles against the transit bosses as well as against the developing new bureaucracy inside the union.

We continued our study group and regular literature tables at City College. In February we held a successful forum on racism and the stolen presidential election. The audience of 15 people was receptive to our speaker's main points: that the exclusion of voters blatantly exposed the racism inherent in the U.S.'s capitalist political system, and that the Democrats undermined their own defense out of fear of mobilizing the Black masses. In the coming semester we plan to do educational and organizational work around the September 29 protests against the IMF and World Bank in Washington and the need for a revolutionary working-class strategy to fight imperialism.

The mass demonstrations against police murders and brutality last year petered out under the misleadership of pro-capitalist politicians, and political activity in New York has been on a downswing since then. We sent a large contingent to a demonstration in Brooklyn to mark the anniversary of the police murder of Patrick Dorismond in March, but sadly the march was badly organized and poorly attended. Last year thousands attended the Dorismond funeral and a militant confrontation with the cops took place; this year no more than 150-200 people showed up, more of them veteran leftists rather than people from the Haitian community.

We have rallied in solidarity with a number of specific struggles against imperialism. Comrades participated in a number

of demonstrations in New York and Washington against the U.S. military's bombing of the Puerto Rican island of Vieques. We had success making contact with a number of militant Latino protestors through our Spanish-language leaflets. (Our bulletins on Vieques in both English and Spanish are available on our website.) But the isolated character of these protests reflects the failure of the leaders of these movements to mobilize mass support.

Defense of the Palestinian masses against increasingly murderous attacks by the U.S.-backed Israeli state is a top priority for us. The LRP participated in a number of meetings, rallies and other events this year, culminating in the second "Right of Return" march in New York April 7. As we have argued in previous issues of *PR*, the Palestinians' most elementary rights, including the refugees' right of return, cannot be won as long as Israel exists as a racist colonial state. The LRP and COFI will continue to argue for the forging of a revolutionary proletarian leadership of the masses of the Middle East, to fight both for socialist revolution and the resolution of the democratic and national questions facing the region.

LRP comrades attended the International Socialist Organization's Northeast Conference in New York in March. We especially emphasized the ISO's betrayal of working-class independence by supporting Ralph Nader's bourgeois populist campaign for President. We were able to intervene effectively and make contacts in several workshops at the conference. An ex-ISO member who is now an LRP supporter distributed an open letter elaborating key areas where the ISO's opportunist politics are at variance with genuine revolutionary communism. This work prepared us well for our intervention at the ISO's Summer School in Chicago in June (see below).

CINCINNATI, QUEBEC

While anti-police brutality struggles have died down in New York, they have flared up elsewhere. Most importantly, as discussed in our article on the front page, a massive rebellion took place in Cincinnati against police brutality. Comrades from New York and Chicago traveled to Cincinnati to participate in the June 2 "March for Justice" as well as organizing and political meetings in the lead-up to the march. The LRP contingent in Cincinnati consisted entirely of younger comrades, and the success of their effort was a sign of our achievements in recruiting and politically training new members.

Comrades from New York also traveled to Québec City, *continued on page 16*

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Where We Stand:

No to New Reformist Parties!

We are entering a critical conjuncture in the political history of the left. Across the world, leading sections of the "far left" have made a dramatic turn toward reformism. In an effort to fill the political vacuum left by the collapse of Stalinism a decade ago and the parallel shift to the right by the social democratic and labor parties, left organizations that previously spoke of building Bolshevik-Leninist vanguards are now forming reformist parties and blocs committed to social-democratic programs.

We are not speaking of supporting reforms under capitalism, which revolutionaries often do. What we see today is a wholesale embrace of the anti-working-class reformist ideology, along with attempts to create whole new reformist institutions to replace the discredited ones. In some cases, the leftists are already taking the logic of their shift further: attempting to build or support openly class collaborationist populist parties and popular fronts.

Not by accident, this turn toward patching up the capitalist political system is occurring just when this system is once again proving itself to be unreformable. Temporary ups and downs cannot hide the fact that the global economy is foundering. Super-exploitation is rampant. The gap between the super-rich capitalists and the increasingly impoverished working class is widening, and the middle strata are disintegrating. Reformism is a proven failure: that is why the mainstream social democrats and liberals, whose firmest social base has always been in the middle class and labor aristocracy, are moving so rapidly rightward. The far left's rehashed reformism has even less viability. Its program is worse than illusory: it is dangerously misleading, given the deepening crisis of the system.

In the language of Bolshevik-Leninism, "centrists" are those who, on the one hand, profess revolution and the independent organization of the vanguard sections of the proletariat but, on the other, practice reformism. Yesterday, unwilling to drop even small tactical differences for the sake of unity, the centrists maintained a wide variety of separate groups in each country and around the world. Today, they are beginning to cluster together, but not in efforts to forge even rhetorically revolutionary unified organizations. Instead they are embracing the few left reformist politicians who still survive and, with them, attempting to resurrect dying social democracy. (We note that we predicted some years ago that the centrists would form new reformist parties to fill the space abandoned by the undisguised social democrats. See "COFI Sets International Tasks," *PR* 48.)

Lenin and Trotsky taught us that reformism and populism were *counterrevolutionary* doctrines dressed up in progressive language. In opposition to the current trend, authentic communists who applaud the death of reformism and want to fight its resurrection must regroup on a principled program and fight this new betrayal. In response to the centrist turn to reformism, communists have to redouble their efforts to re-create the revolutionary party of the proletariat in their own countries, as part of a politically restored genuine Fourth International.

THE NEW REFORMISM

The most widespread and perhaps the largest current of centrists around the world, the United Secretariat of the Fourth International (USec), is on the verge of finally ending its pretence of adhering to the conception and program of Trotskyism. This step will put the seal of approval on the actual practice of most of its followers — blending indistinguishably into the left reform wing of social democracy.

A pioneer effort in the current turn was made by the International Socialist Movement in Scotland, a group which has



Russian revolutionary leaders Trotsky, Lenin and Kamenev, pictured in 1919. Third International insisted on creation of revolutionary parties to fight counter-revolutionary reformism. Today, in the name of Lenin and Trotsky, centrists build new reformist parties.

now left the Committee for a Workers International (CWI), the former Militant Tendency. It launched the Scottish Socialist Party (SSP), a mild-left organization which enlisted under the banner of nationalism and the electoral road to power and has won a seat in the new Scottish parliament. The Scottish followers of the late Tony Cliff and the British Socialist Workers Party (SWP) have already dissolved into this new party.

In England and Wales, the SWP is playing the major role in the Socialist Alliance, an electoral pre-party bloc which counterposed itself to Tony Blair's New Labour Party in the June 2001 parliamentary election. Along with the SWP, the bloc includes the bulk of the centrist left: the Workers Liberty group, the ex-Stalinist Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB, publishers of the *Weekly Worker*), Workers Power (the leading section of the LRCI, the League for a Revolutionary Communist International), the USec's International Socialist Group (publishing *Socialist Outlook*) and smaller formations. The CWI's Socialist Party maintains a half-in, half-out relationship to the SA at the moment, although its basic political differences are merely tactical.

The British miners' leader Arthur Scargill had made an earlier attempt to forge an alternative reformist party by forming the Socialist Labour Party (SLP) for the 1997 parliamentary election. Today it remains as a rival electoral outfit vying with the newer SA, equally reformist but with a Stalinist tinge.

In Germany, elements of the far left, notably friends of the USec and the LRCI section, initially gravitated toward Gregor Gysi's not-so-left ex-Stalinist party, the Partei des Demokratischen Sozialismus (PDS). But the PDS became overtly capitulationist so quickly that most of the far leftists have already fallen away, awaiting a less odiferous reformist formation. In France, Lutte Ouvrière intermittently calls for a new workers party on a vague programmatic basis, while the USec's leading section, the Ligue Communiste Revolutionnaire, tops that with a more concerted drive for a new radical populist party. In the European Union, a variety of centrist groups are attempting to form some sort of common party based on a non-revolutionary program.

In Australia, the new Socialist Alliance modeled on the

British example includes the ex-USec and pro-Stalinist Democratic Socialist Party (DSP), the Cliffite International Socialist Organization, the Freedom Socialist Party, the Australian branch of the Worker-Communist Party of Iraq, Workers Power (of LRCI), Socialist Democracy and the unofficial Cliffites of Socialist Alternative. In Canada, a number of centrist and green groups are likewise discussing the formation of a new reformist or populist bloc or party. The rightward leap by the traditional reformist labor party, the New Democratic Party, has left its decimated left wing in even more of a state of befuddlement than usual. And in the U.S. a few years ago, a medley of union bureaucrats, aided by far leftists, formed the so-called Labor Party, which waits in the wings without running candidates (while its leaders continue to support the bourgeois Democrats) — in the hope of corralling any future break by workers away from the Democratic Party.

Sections of the South African left who recently pushed the Workers List as a reformist electoral front have not given up on such attempts, despite the lack of interest on the part of the large revolutionary-minded section of the proletariat. And, although much of its former allure has already been fading, an older attempt — the Brazilian Workers Party led by Lula — has continued to enthrall many centrist organizations in Latin America and elsewhere.

OPEN CLASS COLLABORATION

Reformism by its nature means class collaboration, so the centrists' turn is not limited to re-creating reformist organizations that are nominally in the working class. In South Africa, the dominant class collaborationist road has been expressed by the fervent support given by left groups to the popular front government led by the bourgeois African National Congress and the Stalinist-reformist Communist Party government. In Indonesia,

the Peoples Democratic Party (PRD), which in the past had pursued a popular frontist line through support to Megawati Sukarnoputri, now appears to have switched support to the equally bourgeois recently ousted president, Abdurrahman Wahid. In this it has been supported by the Australian DSP.

In England, the lunge to the right did not halt with the creation of the Socialist Alliance; the mayoral election in 2000 saw the same centrists support Ken Livingstone and his overtly popular frontist campaign. In the U.S., the now-expelled Cliffites in the International Socialist Organization (ISO), as well as the CWI's Socialist Alternative, endorsed and vigorously pushed the liberal populist campaign waged by Ralph Nader and the middle-class greens. In Zimbabwe, the Cliffites have outdone themselves in burying the class line. They joined, ran on a common electoral slate with and gave a left cover to the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC). The creation of the MDC was initiated by the trade unions, but it was completely taken over by pro-capitalist bureaucrats and politicians who made sure that the party has no organizational links with the unions and is free to be the mouthpiece of the big urban capitalists and white landowners — all of which the ISO(Zim) admits!

The model for the British Socialist Alliance is the Italian Rifondazione Comunista, which has already proved that new reformist parties are no alternative to old ones. In parliament, Rifondazione voted in 1995 for the prime minister's austerity program and thereby saved his bourgeois government. After that it supported the popular-frontist Olive Tree coalition, which instituted an austerity program against the workers. USec leader Livio Maitan is in the leadership of Rifondazione, and members of the centrist International Trotskyist Opposition (publishers of *Proposta*) have also been inside it as an organized tendency.

In Ukraine, the phony Trotskyists in the CWI-affiliated Rabotnichii Sprotiv (Workers Resistance) found themselves in the National Salvation Forum (NSF), the bourgeois opposition bloc supporting the then-Prime Minister Yushchenko. This would have been bad enough even if the NSF didn't include an organization of fascists. The LRCI's fraternal affiliate, Robitnychya Vlad/Molodiye Revoliutsionnye Marksisty (Workers Power/Young Revolutionary Marxists), has called the NSF as progressive but has not yet joined it.

HISTORIC BETRAYALS

The new right turn is of course not the first in the history of the socialist left. At the dawn of the 20th century, social democracy appeared within the workers' movement preaching the utopian lie that capitalism could be reformed and made humane through class collaboration. This was a world-historic betrayal which led to support for the first intra-imperialist world war and bloody fratricide for the international working class.

After the Bolshevik revolution, the social democratic fraud lost much of its appeal for an increasingly revolutionary proletariat around the world. With the isolation of the revolution and the growth of Stalinism, reformism and class collaboration was dressed up as the "popular front" by the new betrayers. This subordination of working-class independence was the next world-historic betrayal, one which contributed to successful counterrevolution in the USSR, paved the way for fascism and boosted support for the second world imperialist war. For nearly seventy years since the mid-1930's, the Stalinist Communist parties have promulgated the ideology of class-collaborationism in the form of populism and popular frontism.

Today's turn is another world-historic act of class treason. No one should be fooled by the fact that the perpetrators are still centrists vacillating between reformism and revolution rather than forces which have already proven themselves to be counterrevolutionary. If their present turn to the right is not halted, they are fated to attain that criminal goal.

We also cannot be fooled by the fact that the forces of international centrism are now comparatively small and still divided. The profound and deepening crisis of capitalism is beginning again

Left Flops in British Election

In the parliamentary election, the left did poorly. The SSP won over 3 percent of the vote (much less than it expected) standing in all 72 constituencies in Scotland, but the Socialist Alliance, despite its high-profile campaign, edged out the barely active SLP in England and Wales, winning well under 2 percent. The total "socialist" vote across Britain was about 180,000.

The Labour Party won re-election handily, but the overall turnout of voters was way down at 59 percent, approaching U.S. levels. The bulk of working-class voters turned off by Labour's attacks on their class chose to abstain; the second largest contingent voted for the bourgeois Liberal Democrats, whose program was on the whole to the left of Labour's. Clearly few in the working class saw the left reformist groupings as a serious alternative. The SWP's post-election claim that "Millions more people agree with the Socialist Alliance and the Scottish Socialist Party than voted for them on 7 June" seems wildly exaggerated.

Most ominous was the 15 percent vote for the fascist British National Party (BNP) in two districts in Oldham, a town where Nazis had sparked violent attacks on Asian houses and shops and were defended by the police when they were beaten back by Asian youth. Despite the mounting fascist threat, the Socialist Alliance declined to run candidates or actively intervene in Oldham.

After the BNP's electoral success, SA and left Labour supporters consoled themselves by pointing out that nationally the fascist parties got a very low vote. But that is irrelevant. By blaming capitalism's miseries on working-class immigrants, the fascists were able to present a hard alternative to Labour's attacks. In contrast, the socialists saw their task as presenting not revolutionary answers to the most oppressed sections of the working class but a mushy reformist alternative to the Labour government. Thus they failed to counter the fascist strategy. ●

to powerfully regenerate potentially revolutionary working class upheavals and mass strikes in country after country around the world. However, as a result of the devastation wrought by social democracy and Stalinism, advanced consciousness within the international working class is still weak, fragile and very susceptible to political corruption. And centrism, for all its present lack of size and power, has its greatest negative impact among the vanguard workers and communist-minded militants in many countries.

As the struggles accelerate and consciousness grows, centrists will be capable of misleading far more decisive sectors of workers than those who follow them today. They are creating pre-emptive political traps which could serve as a serious barrier to the reformation of the world party of socialist revolution.

CONDITIONS BEHIND THE TURN

During the post-World War II period of prosperity, social democracy and Stalinism gained and maintained strength within the working class in many countries. Capitalism in the form of imperialism was able to grant enough concessions to give a material stake in the preservation of the system to significant sectors of the working class. The labor aristocracy and the bureaucratic technical and professional middle classes grew. Under such conditions, reforms won by mass struggles and the threat of revolution were used to promote the dual ideology of reformism and multi-class populism.

As the profound economic and social crisis of the system returned to the surface in the late 1960's and early 1970's, proletarian upheavals and massive general strikes erupted around the globe. The Socialist, Communist and Labour parties tried to derail the workers' struggles. Despite their temporary success, the cynicism they left in their wake contributed heavily to the steady decline in their ability to actually control the mass of workers. During the upheavals, the centrists, facing masses in motion and potentially revolutionary situations, talked more left but fundamentally adapted to the reformist and radical middle-class forces and failed to provide an alternative communist pole of attraction. In the aftermath, while centrism had gained in numbers as a result of revolutionary rhetoric, it could not displace the old decrepit reformist parties.

The thwarting of revolution did not end the mortal contradictions facing the world's rulers. Stalinist East Europe and the USSR itself were the first to explode under the impact of economic collapse and the massive renewal of proletarian uprisings in the 1980's. Even though the revolutions were hijacked by bourgeois pro-Western forces, the demise of Stalinism in the East qualitatively accelerated the decline of the reformist CP's inside the workers' movement in the rest of the world.

The crisis of capitalism was already eating away at past gains made by the working class in the advanced Western imperialist sector as well as the former colonial and semi-colonial world. The labor aristocracy and middle classes were slowly disintegrating, as handfuls blended into the bourgeoisie but the bulk were forced into the lower-paid working class or even more devastated strata. The Stalinist collapse accelerated the decay of whatever was left of the residual loyalty the Communist parties had still commanded among their former followers in the working class in some countries. Reformist parties retained their electoral strength but rarely kept even a vestige of the committed support they once enjoyed. And, among the most militant elements and the more conscious vanguard sectors, contempt for the reformists escalated.

As the crisis deepened and the working class in the West began stirring again, the traditional reformist statesmen began to ditch even their past paper-thin claim to "socialism" and the working class. The absence of a strongly organized revolutionary alternative convinced the labor potentates that they could move even further rightward toward open liberalism and middle-class voters without losing too many working-class votes. At the same time, as the economic crisis deepens and the working class gives



Britain: led by Clifite Socialist Workers Party, and embracing most of the left, Socialist Alliance attempts to revive "old-Labour" reformism.

every sign of renewing its mass struggles in growing areas of the world, these reformist leaders also see the looming danger on the horizon. Thus they gravitate even more closely to the power of the big bourgeoisie.

The closeness of the ties between the British Labour Party's Blair and the U.S. Democrat Clinton demonstrate that the rightward turn of the old dominant reformists has virtually eliminated the remaining policy distinctions they once claimed with respect to open liberal bourgeois ideology. In fact, they move toward overt liberalism at the very moment when that liberalism itself is conservatizing. Thus a vacuum has been created on the reformist left, which has drawn the fascinated attention of the centrists. Hence the dawn of the new "socialist" electoral formations and electoral blocs which combine centrists with bewildered left Labourites as well as the middle-class radical Greens and other pro-bourgeois elements. The pseudo-revolutionaries are now exploring different forms as they try to create new "socialist" institutions to replace the departing former leaders.

"REVOLUTIONARY" DOUBLESPEAK

In making their turn, the various centrists are engaging in what George Orwell called "doublespeak." They use the term "socialist" to describe the new blocs they are forming, in order to justify burying their own supposedly revolutionary program in

favor of proposals that won't trouble mild-left reformists. And, just to be sure that their new programs do not offend reformists or populists, they use the "s-word" (and above all the "r-word") as rarely as possible when listing their demands. Echoing the Stalinists' time-honored class-collaborationist propaganda for popular fronts and "people's democracy," they increasingly stress the supposed progressiveness of populism.

Further, they employ classless terms like "anti-capitalist" to describe the growing protests against the global economy. These demonstrations are important but are multi-class in composition. They attract people who are not yet politically aware along with anarchists, liberals, radical middle-class environmentalists, arch-nationalists, back-to-nature proponents, trade unionists, subjective revolutionaries and real revolutionaries. They are led most often by petty-bourgeois and labor bureaucrats whose answer to global imperialism is a reactionary program rooted in national chauvinism and protectionism.

The mass of activists are still confused and have mixed consciousness; but their fundamental interests and desire to fight world-wide oppression are being betrayed by the misleaders. As Lenin and Trotsky stressed, the reformist outlook of working-class activists can be transitory; but it is permanent for the leaders because it reflects their long-term interest and role in society. That is why it is vital to participate in these joint actions; but at the same time it is necessary to expose the pro-capitalist programs of the liberal and reformist leaders. It is criminal to legitimize the anti-working class betrayers by lumping them with those they betray under the common and outrageously false label of "anti-capitalist."

The centrists hope to win the "anti-globalization movement" to their new formations. Their aversion to attacking the labor and "progressive" leaders in large part stems from their need to win those elements in order to give bourgeois legitimacy to the blocs. Without the reformist celebrities, the centrists fear that the new alliances stand little chance of being taken seriously and achieving the authenticity they crave.

The Cliffites in particular notoriously refuse to criticize the reformists they work with. So it is ironic that in the SWP's theoretical journal they quote what they call Trotsky's "general outline of the united front" in explaining why it is necessary to do precisely what they do not do:

The Communist Party proves to the masses and their organizations its readiness to wage battles in common with them for aims, no matter how modest, so long as they lie on the road of the historical development of the proletariat; the Communist Party in this struggle takes into account the actual condition of the class at each given moment; it turns

not only to the masses, but also to those organizations whose leadership is recognized by the masses; it confronts the reformist organizations before the eyes of the masses, with real problems of the class struggle. The policy of the united front hastens the revolutionary development of the class by revealing in the open that the common struggle is undermined not by the disruptive act of the Communist Party but by the conscious sabotage of the leaders of the Social Democracy. (Quoted from *The Struggle against Fascism in Germany*, in "Anti-capitalism, reformism and socialism" by John Rees, *International Socialism* No.90, Spring 2001.)

Rees comments that "Trotsky was writing about the mass Communist parties and mass reformist parties in the 1930's, but the same general approach can be applied by much smaller revolutionary organizations today." Yet the SWP, ISO & Co. often invite onto their platforms union leaders, Labour parliamentarians and other openly reformist speakers — and we can guarantee without hesitancy that they have not once revealed the "conscious sabotage" of the workers' struggle by their "united front" partners. That is because the Socialist Alliances are not genuine united fronts, which are agreements for common action, but propaganda blocs among people who have held different programs, in which alleged revolutionaries subordinate their programs to those of their reformist partners.

THE REVOLUTIONARY TAIL

Perhaps the most corrupt attempt to revitalize reformism is that put forward by groups like the CPGB and Workers Power in Britain which see themselves as the far left of the movement. They do all they can to build the reformist formations, cheerlead their electoral efforts — and justify all this by claiming that they are trying to win the blocs to a revolutionary program. Of course, they will never convince the open reformist leaders to accept their program; hence they will never convince their fellow opportunists in the rest of the far left. If there were any chance that they would actually succeed, that would defeat the whole purpose of the turn and mean the death of the rotten blocs. Therefore, once their diplomatically proposed slogans are safely defeated, they breathe a sigh of relief and join wholeheartedly in the reformist electoral game. Their "transitional" or "revolutionary" interventions are a pretense, sadly fooling their adherents — and even themselves — that they are really acting as Bolsheviks.

Workers Power in particular claims that its method is that of Trotsky's Transitional Program. But the Transitional Program was an open attack on reformism, not an attempt to cover it as a left tail.

To see how false these claims are, consider the question of a Labor Party in the United States in the late 1930's, an example where Trotskyists did support the formation of a new class party not committed to communism from the start. Trotsky's advocacy of a labor party was based on the fact that the mass class struggle had exhausted itself on the industrial and economic level and would have to move toward a political confrontation with the bourgeois state. He predicted that a workers' movement would develop, demanding an independent party based on the proven militancy of the new CIO unions. The mass of workers would not, at that point, come directly to the small and relatively weak revolutionary organization. Rather they saw the strength they needed as coming from the big, fighting unions.

Under such circumstances it would have been stupidly sectarian to counterpose the small vanguard party to the huge class party workers sought. Moreover, the program of the party the movement would produce — reformist or revolutionary — was not pre-ordained. The Trotskyists agreed with their working-class brothers and sisters on the need for a mass party of their class, but they counterposed appropriate transitional demands to the reformist program of the labor and Stalinist misleaders.

The labor party demand was designed as a hostile challenge to put the CIO leadership on the spot in front of the mass of fighting workers who had illusions in the leaders' commitment to

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independence and militancy. It was meant to force the reformist labor bureaucrats to break with the Democratic Party and take state power — or else stand exposed as the fakers that the revolutionaries openly insisted that they were.

Trotsky stated explicitly that the program they stood for could only be carried out by a revolutionary workers' party. "It would be absurd to say that we advocate a reformist party." That was the aim of the Stalinists and their ilk.

The Transitional Program was rooted in the idea that workers would increasingly come to understand their fundamental material interests in the course of class struggle. As Trotsky detailed, struggle by itself can produce backward as well as advanced consciousness; the key for communist success is that the vanguard workers' party truthfully point out the revolutionary lessons in contrast to counterrevolutionary reformist deceptions. "Why not say openly what is? Without any camouflage, without any diplomacy."

In contrast, Workers Power suggests that the SA should adopt transitional demands like state expropriation of industry without compensation. Naturally, given the material and ideological power of capitalism, the mass of workers attracted to such a measure will initially demand it of the existing state rather than immediately opting for socialist revolution. In going through a common struggle, revolutionaries can show that only the revolutionary party can carry out such programs through the overthrow of the bourgeois state. By not insisting that their program requires revolution and the communist party, Workers Power helps the reformist and pro-reformist leaders perpetrate utopian illusions in the capitalist state.

One difference between Trotsky's method and today's centrists' is that Trotsky's proposed Labor Party was based on an existing, massive working-class struggle — whose victories and obstacles would help the authentic communists convince many workers that a revolutionary program was the only road forward. The Socialist Alliances today do not reflect proletarian strength and struggle in the minds of the workers. They appear as leftist versions of the present labor parties. But they are decidedly inferior to those reformist parties in that they are clearly too weak to change the present ominous situation. In Britain, industrial strike action has been at a very low ebb. In Australia it has been stronger, but still the strike weapon has hardly been exhausted. The working class has not yet wielded its potential for united action and enormous power in either country. Consequently the SA's can only divert advanced revolutionary-minded workers without reaching

the mass of our class. They are pre-emptive formations designed to trap and tame future mass working-class-led upheavals.

In such situations, authentic revolutionaries fight for the general strike as the means for translating the coming mass struggles into a political confrontation with the bourgeois state. The general strike is a weapon most useful when the class leadership is weak and the masses do not yet realize the power they can have in unified action. Once our class recognizes its power, all things are possible.

At this time, neither the so-called "anti-capitalist movement" nor the struggles of the working class have been successfully channelled toward the new reformist formations. But it is not for the centrists' lack of trying. The Cliffites and the other major players already refrain from raising "far out" demands or challenging the reformist leaders. When the coming mass explosions mature, Workers Power and like-minded further left groups will lose their ability to raise the kind of radical demands that scare off their reformist playmates. Hopefully the subjective dedication of some of their followers will enable them to break free from those organizations and their role as left tails on the reformist kite.

It is telling that neither the SWP, nor its far-left allies that assert their Trotskyism more loudly, like to cite what Trotsky always said about electoral blocs. For example:

The Bolsheviks did conclude practical agreements with the revolutionary petty-bourgeois organizations During the elections to the state Duma, they did, under certain conditions, enter into electoral blocs with the Mensheviks or the Social Revolutionaries on the second ballot. That is all. No common "programs," no common and permanent institutions, no renunciation of the criticism of temporary allies. Such episodic agreements and compromises [were] confined strictly to practical aims — and Lenin never spoke of any other kind (Leon Trotsky on France, p. 146.)

Or, as Trotsky had said about the bloc he urged the German Communists to form with the Social Democrats to stop Hitler:

No common platform with the Social Democracy, or with the leaders of the German trade unions, no common publications, banners, placards! March separately, but strike together! Agree only on how to strike, whom to strike, and when to strike! (The Struggle Against Fascism in Germany, pp. 138-9.)

Contrast this with the SWP's burying itself inside the Scottish Socialist Party and with Workers Power and the CPGB calling for their Socialist Alliance to be a permanent "revolutionary" party.

Spartacists Cross Their "Crude Class Line"

In the British election, the Spartacist League correctly denounced the Labour Party for its racist and anti-working class policies. It further condemned the Socialist Alliance as a surrogate for Labour (indeed, SA and most of its left components called for a Labour vote in districts that SA was not contesting). But the Spartacists showed their own eagerness to hunt for "good" reformists by urging a vote for Scargill's SLP despite its lack of both a revolutionary program and any impetus from the class struggle.

The justification they offered was that the SLP is "running an independent working-class campaign that draws a class line, however crudely, against the Labour Party." But midway in the campaign they discovered that one of the SLP candidates was a cop, an activist in the anti-worker probation officers' "union." Did the Spartacists then withdraw their support for the SLP? No: they called for a vote for the SLP minus the one cop candidate, claiming that the SLP was still "running a supportable campaign."

No way. The SLP, backing a cop candidate, proved that it could not draw even a crude class line any more than Labour. By the Spartacists' own method, just as they denied support to SA for

endorsing Labour, they should have dis-endorsed the SLP for supporting a cop. The attraction of Scargill's pro-Stalinism (he, like they, endorsed General Jaruzelski's military suppression of the Polish workers' struggle in 1981) was enough to drag the Spartacists across even the crude class line they themselves had drawn. And they, like he, hid the fact that Jaruzelski's "workers' state" sent scab coal to Britain during the miners' strike that Scargill led.

But their method itself is wrong. It has at times been tactically necessary to support voting for the Labour Party, as in 1920 when Lenin famously called for supporting Labour "as a rope supports a hanged man." The Labour Party, despite its working-class base, has always been a party of British capital. Acting as imperialist cops, it far outshines whatever evils the SLP's probation officer commits. The determining factor is whether the workers' perceive that the reformist party is leading them in struggle. Today that is true neither of Labour, the SA or the SLP.

Critical support is a weapon designed to expose reformist misleaders and deflate workers' illusions in them. It is not an award for setting up a crude and easily crossable class line. ●

PRECEDENTS FOR THE NEW TURN

The scope of the centrists' present turn is qualitatively greater than anything they have done in the recent past. We note, however, that many of the pseudo-Trotskyist currents have crossed the class line before, as if in preparation for today. Here are some major examples:

1. The overwhelming majority of groups who claim the heritage of Trotskyism still support the concept of "deformed workers' states" — that is, they believe that proletarian states were achieved without working-class-led revolutions. Further, since these states in Eastern Europe and East Asia were formed and led by Communist Parties, ruling openly in class collaborationist blocs with bourgeois elements, the "orthodox Trotskyist" conception in fact means that socialist revolutions can be made by popular fronts.

2. In the late 1940's, virtually all varieties of pseudo-Trotskyists favored deep entry into the right-moving social democratic and/or Stalinist parties. In sharp contrast to Trotsky's entry strategy in the 1930's, this was not an attempt to break left-moving workers from their reformist misleaders, but an endorsement of illusions in the supposedly progressive — if too moderate — character of those parties.

3. In 1952, the Trotskyist POR in Bolivia, a significant political force, actively supported the left bourgeois nationalists during the revolution in that country, thereby helping to doom a major proletarian upheaval. No leadership body within the degenerating Trotskyist Fourth International uttered even a peep of opposition to this overt act of class capitulation. Shortly afterward, the Ceylonese Trotskyists joined their bourgeois government. Even though the FI's embarrassed leadership had to oppose this blatant act, it was a product of their method.

4. During the 1960's, the pseudo-Trotskyist milieu was rife with organizations which saw the student milieu as the revolutionary vanguard in place of the urban proletariat. They also awarded that role to peasant-based guerrilla struggles in a number of countries. Thus they helped detour not only the potential proletarian revolution but also the liberation of the peasantry, whose only chance could come through working-class leadership.

The historical repetition of past betrayals, today by purported Trotskyists, does not fundamentally come as a result of multiple conspiracies or the abundance of bad ideas. As Lenin and Trotsky taught us, such serious transgressions can only be caused materially — that is, by the invasion of petty bourgeois and middle-class interests into the workers' movement. In our opinion, therefore, it is no accident that the overwhelming majority of those groups who call

themselves Bolshevik-Leninist today blatantly disagree with the view explicitly stated by Marx, Lenin (after 1905) and Trotsky — that the working class itself achieves its own revolutionary socialist class consciousness. Instead, they claim that such consciousness must be imported from the middle-class intelligentsia.

This anti-Marxist and anti-proletarian view reflects the fact that during the period of post-World War II prosperity, the rampant growth of the middle class and the labor aristocracy around the world not only reinvigorated reformism for that time, but invaded the ranks of the Trotskyist Fourth International itself. Not only did this provide the basis for the new leadership which corrupted and destroyed the revolutionary program and politics of the FI by the mid-1950's, it steered that leadership into its capitulatory adaptations to the reformists.

WHAT IS TO BE DONE

The liberation of the proletariat is the task of the proletariat itself; it is a task it must carry out in opposition to middle class "condescending saviors." Building the revolutionary party is still the key communist slogan. Pushing for reformist electoral blocs and parties now is not only counterposed to the central task of building the revolutionary party, it is also counterposed to the struggle for mass action.

Unity in action is vital for the working class and its allies. In the coming period, revolutionaries will struggle not only for the general strike and other mass actions but will raise the proletarian united front as a battle cry. Once again the idea that the working class must lead all the dispossessed and the oppressed in their struggles will become the outlook of millions of fighters.

Communists "say what is": reformism is not a moderate or too slow form of socialism, but its mortal, counterrevolutionary enemy. It is an enemy of whatever genuine reforms can still be achieved, since they can only come as a result of mass action and the threat of revolution. In contrast to the rightward moving centrists and their attempt to breathe life into the rotting corpses of reformism and populism, working-class communists stand openly for socialism and proletarian revolution. Even when circumstances call for tactical blocs with reformist parties, we openly warn of their treachery and criticize their leaderships. At every turn, we insist on the necessity of re-creating the communist vanguard party — in contrast to all calls for new reformist, radical and green parties. The chief task facing the proletariat today is the re-creation of the authentic Fourth International! ●

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Huge Quebec Protest Confronts Trade Summit

By Joseph Andrews

With eyes stinging from the clouds of tear gas Canadian police used against demonstrators, LRP comrades returned from the rally against the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) summit in Quebec City on April 20-22 like most of the other tens of thousands of demonstrators — with mixed emotions. Around 60,000 people rallied together in the face of mammoth police intimidation and violence. Until the protest of hundreds of thousands in Genoa, Italy, in July, it was the largest of the many “anti-globalization” protests that began in Seattle in November 1999 and an inspiring display of the potential power of the working class.

In contrast to previous protests, the majority in Quebec City were workers mobilized by their trade unions — mainly from the province of Quebec and the rest of Canada. There was also a large international presence: auto and public service workers from the U.S., trade unionists from Chile, anti-sweatshop organizers from Mexican maquiladoras, among others.

But the pro-capitalist trade union bureaucrats of the Canadian Labor Congress (CLC), the Fédération des travailleurs et travailleuses du Québec (FTQ) and the Centrale des syndicats du Québec (CSQ) succeeded in marshaling the majority of demonstrators away from the Summit and stopped them from uniting with other protesters. That was an infuriating defeat. In contrast to Seattle, the great potential for the protest to shut the Summit down and send a victorious message of struggle to the workers and oppressed of the world was lost.

For all that, it remains the duty of communists to remind the protesters, unionists and youth alike, that capitalism will not be seriously threatened by periodic demonstrations even if they do succeed occasionally in shutting down the imperialist summits. The only solution to super-exploitation will come through the action of the super-exploited themselves. Massive strike movements against the impositions of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the governments that serve it are already taking place in Bolivia, Ecuador and Argentina. That poses the strongest challenge to the FTAA and similar imperialist schemes.

UNION BUREAUCRATS' BETRAYAL

For the three days of the summit, Quebec was a walled city, and not just in the historical sense. A 10-foot high wire fence had been constructed by the government surrounding several square miles of the city center where the capitalist politicians were to meet. This police-state barricade became the focal goal of the protests. On Friday the 20th, thousands of “direct actionists” mobilized by the *Convergence des luttes anti-capitalistiques* (Anti-Capitalist Convergence — CLAC) and the *Comite d'accueil du sommet des Ameriques* (Welcoming Committee for the Summit of the Americas — CASA) sat down in front of the fence, while some succeeded in toppling a fifteen-foot section. Riot police armed with nightsticks and guns moved to close the gap, firing tear gas, water cannons and hard-rubber bullets. The gas streamed over the city center and even into the summit meeting rooms, forcing an hour's delay in the opening ceremonies.

On Saturday, union contingents led the more massive demonstration. There were banners and placards from seemingly every union in Canada. There was also the social-democratic New Democratic Party (NDP) of Canada, which heavily pushed the pro-capitalist slogan of “Fair Trade, not Free Trade,” as the AFL-CIO of the U.S. had done in Seattle.

At a central juncture, the march divided. The activist groupings turned uphill to confront the fence and the police. But the bulk of the



Unions mobilized tens of thousands for Quebec City protests, but bureaucrats led workers away from confrontation with imperialists.

crowd, including almost all the union contingents, was directed away from the center by a solid line of “security” marshals. After realizing that the union bureaucrats were leading the march to nowhere, many turned back. The bureaucrats, terrified at the record numbers that had responded for the demonstration, decided to bring the action to an end in the most disorganizing, demobilizing and demoralizing way possible — at a time when several thousand activists were facing the cops, their tear gas and missiles at the fence.

Subsequent web postings from Canadian union militants have bitterly denounced the betrayal by their leaders. Over the course of the weekend, at least 400 protesters were arrested. The police used so much gas during the day that no one was exempt from its effects — including the official delegates to the summit. Rumor has it that the day's proceedings were cut short due to the infiltration of gas into the conference center. And even those who had been led away from the confrontations with the cops were victimized by the clouds of tear gas that the cops spread over the city.

Whereas the Seattle protest in 1999 subjected the imperialists to world-wide embarrassment, the inconvenience suffered by the delegates from the gas was only a minimal gain for our side. Had the tens of thousands of unionists not been diverted, it would have been another story. The union march was deliberately timed for the end of the summit, instead of uniting with the efforts of the “direct actionists” to shut it down. As we wrote in our bulletin, “Had the unions called out all the workers to demonstrate on Friday, we almost certainly would have had the forces to shut the summit down.” And as it turned out, if not for the bureaucrats' sabotage, on Saturday the ruling-class summit would have suffered a defeat echoing around the world.

TAKING ON THE BUREAUCRATS

Those who want to oppose capitalism must oppose the role of the pro-capitalist union leaders who do so much to keep the system in place. Revolutionaries push for working-class mass action to defeat the capitalist attacks. But they must always warn their fellow workers of the union tops' treacherous role and expose the connection between their betrayals and their pro-capitalist politics. We must consistently fight for international working-class solidarity and oppose the reactionary protectionism and national chauvinism that the bureaucrats promote.

Unfortunately, all the major supposedly anti-capitalist forces

involved in the Quebec City action failed to challenge the bureaucracy. While some "socialists," including the Stalinist Communist Party and the supposedly Trotskyist International Socialists, participated in the official union-led coalitions, they did so without demanding that the union leaders mobilize to shut the summit down. Thus they tacitly accepted the union bureaucrats' aim of avoiding a real struggle.

On the other hand, the leaders of the go-it-alone direct actionists in CASA and CLAC also let the union tops off the hook by refusing to challenge them to join the actions to shut the summit down. Bypassing the established leaders of the working class leads only to weak parodies of mass action. Students alone do not have the power that the working class does to stop profit-making at its source. At present, only the unions have the resources to counter the attacks from the state. Failing to challenge the politics of the pro-capitalist misleaders only guarantees their continued domination of the struggle.

Most importantly, students or mixed-class youth do not have

the ultimate interest in doing away with capitalism that the international working class has, nor its capacity to create a new socialist society. As we wrote in our bulletin, "The only leadership that can lead workers' current struggles all the way to victory is one that has no stake in preserving the system because it is dedicated to its overthrow — a revolutionary socialist leadership." In struggles like Quebec City, the task of revolutionaries is to make the link between our fellow workers' immediate struggles and the building of a revolutionary proletarian party that recruits and trains the most politically advanced workers as conscious leaders of the class struggle — who know that the capitalist state has to be confronted, defeated and replaced.

FREE TRADE MEANS IMPERIALIST DOMINATION

The bourgeois governments made clear that they are ready to impose major violations of bourgeois-democratic rights to prevent any challenge to them and their FTAA. The FTAA represents the planned expansion of the North American Free Trade Agreement —

Protest and Repression in Genoa

The leaders of world imperialism met in Genoa, Italy in July to render more orderly their profit-grubbing exploitation and bloody repression of working people across the world. Given the deepening crisis of capitalism, they have redoubled their attack upon us.

But we are not just victims. In response to the accelerated capitalist attack, the struggle spearheaded by the working class has burst out in renewed fury all across the "South," from Argentina to Zimbabwe. And it is spreading to the imperialist North. The recent "anti-globalization" demonstrations are symbols, reflections and byblows of the mass uprisings now developing across the planet.

The protests in Genoa against the G8 summit marked a turning point in these demonstrations. In size, political consciousness and combativity, they qualitatively outstripped all other "post-Seattle" eruptions. Most significantly, for the first time angry young workers turned out on their own volition in large numbers.

In turn, the repressive brutality by the mercenary tools of the imperialist statesmen massively escalated. The conclave took place behind a huge steel-reinforced wall and was "protected" by surface-to-air missiles, helicopters, tear gas, water cannon, live ammunition, armored vehicles and thousands of police thugs. Provocateurs infiltrated the ranks of the protestors. Cops mercilessly beat pacifist as well as militant protestors in an indiscriminate orgy of violence. Bought-and-paid-for police scum were joined by openly fascist police scum. Even before the protest, the imperialists signaled their willingness to use armed power; they clearly were sending a message.

Carlo Giuliani was not the first comrade to be killed in the current round of struggles. Class warriors in Latin America, Africa and Asia have been murdered as well; but of course the capitalist media take more account of the death of a white European. In spite of that, Carlo's death is very important; he was a young working-class fighter and his life was precious. And it symbolizes the class struggle being waged in the imperialist countries. He was not murdered for his particular views, but because the imperialist rulers, forced to cower behind their walls, were delivering their message to the workers of the world: "Continue to assert your human dignity and rise up against our pillage and we will crush you without mercy!"

The reason the imperialists can accelerate exploiting the international working class is due to the capitulatory conduct of the labor bureaucrats around the world. By restraining the masses, they have allowed the ruling classes to boost their attack.

The power of the labor bureaucracy derives from its domination over the strategically vital and organized centers of the working class. It is not simply numbers alone. Workers are organized by the work process itself and brought into direct clash with the bosses and their profit-making. The inevitability of capitalist state intervention in defense of property and profits inexorably poses the question of which of the two basic class forces in society will rule.

Crucially, such struggles develop class consciousness and fit the working class to rule. The bureaucrats are capitalism's labor lieutenants acting to preserve the system by undermining the only struggle that can overthrow it and create a better world. The bureaucracy cripples not only the struggles erupting in mines and mills around the world, but also protests like Genoa.

By omission and commission, the labor bureaucracy has undermined the potential impact of the series of anti-globalization protests. In Genoa, instead of stepping up their efforts in the wake of Carlo's murder, the Italian CGIL labor bureaucrats cancelled their promised mobilization. A general strike and a massive display of force on the streets of Genoa could have turned the whole event around. If the unions had fighting leaders, they could have mobilized and led the protests in the first place. Organized, armed and trained battalions of workers present on the scene, leading the 300,000 demonstrators, could have forced the mercenary troops to back down.

Such workers' legions could do what thousands of middle-class elements (and even thousands of unmobilized and untrained young workers) could not do. The middle class lacks social cohesion and power. In the power vacuum left by the bureaucracy, this inherent lack of discipline has been turned into near-chaos in Genoa. Do-your-own-thing "diversity" and "affinity group" policies were perpetrated by the reformist NGO and campaign group chieftains, as well as by the autonomist Ya Basta and the anarchist Black Bloc leaders. Such tactics were a boon for the organized police hoodlums. In Genoa, although the imperialists' intentions were broadcast beforehand, the failure to warn the young protestors in advance, along with the lack of a disciplined response, was particularly criminal. The "far left" leaderships and their "red blocs" acted no better.

The idea of an assault on the "red zone" around the conclave was particularly dangerous. The more adventurist leaders sought to take advantage of the ardent desire of some of the best militants to take the imperialist summit apart by urging an attack which, given the balance of arms, could only have been suicidal. Cannon fodder do not make revolutions; conscious and disciplined fighters do.

The present leadership of the working class, the trade union bureaucrats and their camp followers in the reformist parties are more frightened of mass upheavals than they are of the imperialist police. Revolutionaries will fight side by side with their fellow workers in every struggle that they can against the capitalists — including in symbolic protests like Genoa. At the same time, they will point out the lessons of those struggles — the necessity for united mass actions and general strikes — through which the international working class can lead all the exploited and oppressed and really challenge bourgeois state power. Authentic communists will never fail to expose the present misleaders of our class and to raise the cry of the revolutionary proletariat to re-create the Fourth International! ●

NAFTA — to cover nearly all the Americas. This means an ominous expansion of the attacks that NAFTA has already signified. Real wages for Mexican workers have fallen over 35 percent since NAFTA took effect — while the peasantry of Mexico has seen its living standards decimated. Social services like health care and education have been slashed. NAFTA has also opened the working class of Canada and the U.S. to increased attack.

“Free trade” agreements aim primarily at intensifying the domination and exploitation of subjugated nations by the imperialist powers. They knock down barriers to imperialist ownership and profit making in the already super-exploited nations. They go hand-in-hand with the work of the IMF and World Bank, which hold Third World economies hostage, refusing to extend them credit unless pro-imperialist trade laws are established and draconian austerity policies are implemented.

As their economic interests in the “Third World” grow, so does the imperialists’ need to guarantee those investments by funding and training local armed forces, propping up friendly dictatorships — and when all else fails, by direct invasions. In Mexico, for decades the U.S. backed Mexico’s armed forces and its infamously corrupt ruling party, the PRI (Partido Revolucionario Institucional). When Mexico’s economic decline under NAFTA produced a political crisis that led to the collapse of PRI rule, the U.S. turned to Vicente Fox’s PAN (Partido de Accion Nacional) which has been even more subservient to U.S. domination. In Colombia, President Bush is continuing Clinton’s support to the Colombian government’s civil war against left-wing guerrilla forces, equipping its military and right-wing paramilitaries with advanced weaponry, technology and training.

MASS STRUGGLES AGAINST IMPERIALISM

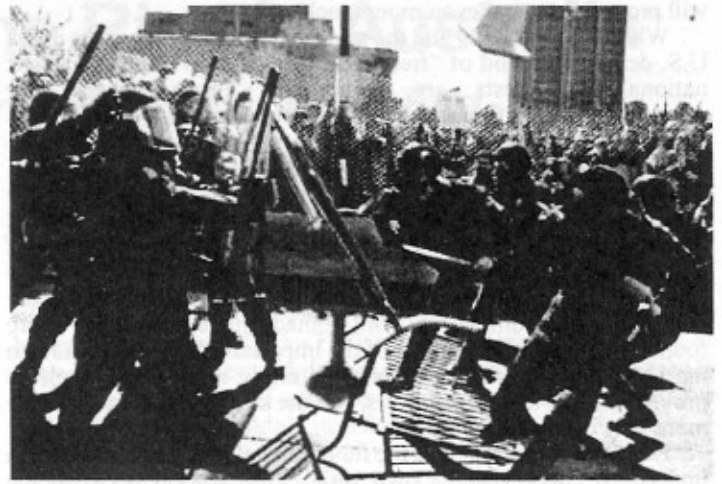
Fortunately, the working class has already begun its fight against the imperialists’ “free trade” offensive. Argentina was recently shaken by general strikes against IMF-sponsored austerity measures, and more such strikes are being planned. The Bolivian masses have successfully rebelled against the privatization of water services, despite military repression. In Ecuador, workers and indigenous peasants have used mass strikes and uprisings to topple governments in response to attempts to make the U.S. dollar the national currency to allow greater exploitation by U.S. business. Beyond the Americas, general strikes and riots have similarly broken out in response to IMF and World Bank policies, from Indonesia to Zimbabwe.

For communists, such struggles by the working class and poor are key to defeating imperialist attacks and every other degrading aspect of life under capitalism. Mass struggle can beat back the attacks and even win some temporary reforms and improvements. But capitalism is an economic system based on brutal exploitation, and as it lurches deeper into crisis it will survive only by intensifying its oppression. An end to capitalist misery cannot be brought about by a policy limited to reforms but only by revolution that overthrows the capitalists’ rule.

Only the working class, in alliance with all oppressed peoples, can lead humanity out of the catastrophe capitalism is preparing. The working class alone has the power, organization and potential for revolutionary consciousness that comes from being at the heart of capitalist production. And only the working class is driven by its interests to overthrow capitalism, because it alone has no stake in the system’s survival. The working class can replace capitalism with a new society of freedom and plenty. Its powerful revolutionary struggle will also attract those students and activists who identify with the interests of our class.

CANADIAN STRIKES PREVIEW MASS STRUGGLE

While workers around the world have risen up in explosive struggles against imperialist free trade attacks, there hasn’t been such a massive response by workers in North America — yet. Certainly the class struggle in Canada is more advanced than in the U.S. It was the pressure from Canadian workers for a general strike that forced the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) to call the Days of Action of 1996-7 against the right-wing government in Ontario. But in that case, the union leaders purposefully avoided calling the indefinite provincial strike that was needed to win, choosing a



Protesters clash with riot police at Quebec City Summit.

series of weaker one-day strikes instead. Thus, they allowed the struggle to be defeated.

Further back, the province-wide general strike in Quebec in 1972 was an even more advanced and critical landmark in working-class history. And recent strikes by Quebec nurses and teachers (against the austerity measures coming down from the PQ provincial government as well as the Liberals in the Federal government) were additional strong hints of what our class can do. Under a leadership that doesn’t stop at halfway measures, these struggles could have led to a general strike that would not only have beaten back the immediate attacks but would have also built for a much more powerful mobilization against the FTAA.

Labor struggles in Canada, while far ahead of anything seen recently in the U.S., were still sold out because they remained under the leadership of pro-capitalist bureaucrats. The reformist leaders accept the limits imposed by capitalism and fear mass action by the workers. This is why proletarian revolutionaries fight to build a revolutionary party leadership internationally. Workers need a revolutionary party which can both lead today’s struggles to victory and work toward the ultimate triumph over capitalism. At the present juncture, where the workers lack mass fighting parties of their class, such a revolutionary leadership would advocate united general strikes to show the class its own strength and defeat the bosses’ attacks.

In preparation for the Quebec summit, the leaders of the CLC, the FTQ and the CSQ did far more to mobilize their members than the U.S. AFL-CIO did for the anti-IMF protests in Washington D.C. last year. (See *PR* 61.) But their reason for taking action wasn’t any dedication to defending the working class against the bosses’ attacks. Rather, they feared that their members would throw them out of office if they didn’t at least make a show of mobilizing.

NATIONALISM IS CHAUVINIST POISON

In Quebec City, gas wasn’t the only poison in the air: the other was nationalism. Of course, the worst poisoners were the U.S. imperialists, their allies and their pawns who participated in the FTAA summit itself. But the fact that the various protest leaderships themselves had only nationalist responses to these “globalists” is suicidal for the struggle. The answer to imperialism must be genuine working-class internationalism. No workers, neither in the imperialist countries nor in those the imperialists superexploit, can gain from national barriers and protectionism.

The nationalist responses of protectionism and “fair trade” that the labor and social-democratic leaders are selling to their followers are not only reactionary but utopian. The idea that jobs and high wages can be preserved behind nationalist barriers shows an abysmal understanding of capitalism. The imperialist corporations will inevitably seek and find low-wage areas with a mass oversupply of labor in their drive to reduce costs, especially with today’s falling profits. Under the whip of international competition, they have no choice. Flimsy legal barriers have never stopped them for long — and in today’s even more integrated global market protectionist walls

will prove ephemeral even more quickly.

When the AFL-CIO and the middle-class radical leaders in the U.S. demand the end of "free trade," there is no doubt that their nationalist interests are paramount. The Quebec City demonstration testified to the fact that their Canadian counterparts are also perpetrating a nationalist fraud, which can only betray the anti-FTAA struggle in that country.

When U.S. jingoists decry "free-trade" agreements for attacking U.S. "sovereignty," they are plainly delusional, since it is always the U.S. corporations on whose behalf the sovereignty of the U.S. government is exercised that benefit most from those agreements — both within their own borders and throughout the world. Similar complaints from Canada have somewhat more foundation: not only are most of the imperialist corporations from the U.S., but Canadian workers still enjoy more social welfare provisions than do U.S. workers, and the trade agreements are one more way of attacking them.

But none of this changes the fundamental fact that Canada is an imperialist country in its own right. The relation between the Canadian bourgeoisie and the oppressed Quebecois is clearly imperialist. And the superexploitation of workers in Latin America and other oppressed parts of the world accrues to the benefit of the Canadian ruling class as well as that of the U.S. With the heightening of anti-immigrant attacks in the U.S., Canada has become an increasingly inviting refuge for immigrants from those countries, who in turn are subject to oppression and superexploitation within its borders.

Canada serves both economically and militarily as a junior partner to U.S. imperialism, within the combined framework of NAFTA (and the U.S.-Canada free trade agreement that preceded it), NATO and the U.N. Thus Canada played a prominent role in the recent U.S.-led occupation of Haiti by U.N. "peacekeepers." And when Canada acts independently of the U.S., as with its closer ties to Cuba, it does so to enable sections of Canadian capital to more efficiently exploit the resources of the imperialized world, in collaboration with European imperialists instead of the U.S.

By painting the Canadian politicians as willing dupes of the U.S. government, Canadian nationalists portray imperialist agreements as a betrayal of an imaginary social partnership that binds together all classes and national and ethnic groups in the Canadian polity. In reality they are conscious attacks by enemies, not dupes, aimed at the working classes of the Americas as a whole, beginning with the economically weakest in the imperialized countries.

Canadian nationalism was visible in demonstrators' propaganda. The NDP pushed the nationalist "fair trade" line. The radical lobbyists aptly named the "Council of Canadians," whose leaders were reportedly among the principal speakers in the tent at the beginning of the march, base their entire program upon it. The main Stalinist groups present — the CPC and the CPC-ML — were restrained in their Canadian nationalism only by their simultaneous attempt to be soft on Quebecois nationalism. But more chillingly, it was a general atmosphere in the air, as made clear by the hand-painted sign held aloft by one youthful Canadian demonstrator: "34 nations, 33 dupes."

It is not only the U.S. liberals and union officials who contribute to the imperialist assault on the masses of the truly superexploited nations. They have the vigorous assistance of their Canadian sidekicks.

THE NATIONALISM OF THE OPPRESSED

The displays of nationalism during the protests by workers from Haiti, Chile, Mexico and other Caribbean and Latin American countries were surely understandable as expressions of defiance against imperialism. Nevertheless, they too are self-defeating, in that they also promote the idea that "national unity" can defeat the corporate invaders. In reality, many of the bourgeois, petty-bourgeois and union leaders, both at home and in immigrant communities, are really junior partners of the imperialists, looking for a bigger share in the spoils of the exploitation of their own people.

Such a betraying force was evident in the Quebec City demonstration. The Parti Quebecois (PQ), in spite of the fact that

Left Opportunism

Had there been a prize for sheer chutzpah at Quebec City, it would have been strongly contested. A strong case could be made for the U.S. International Socialist Organization (ISO), which hushed up its prior refusal to oppose NAFTA in order to join the popular opposition to NAFTA's bigger, uglier offspring, the FTAA.

Dishonorable mention also goes to the International Communist League (the Spartacists), who turned out at the bus boarding location in New York to denounce us for going to a nationalist action, but whose Canadian affiliate in the "Trotskyist League" nevertheless made a point of having a literature table at the presumably unsupportable demonstration.

it presides as the governing party in Quebec province over major austerity attacks on Quebec's workers, opportunistically sent a contingent of young and enthusiastic supporters to the march. At least the NDP, which similarly attacks workers in Ontario, British Columbia and Saskatchewan, had the guts to state its opposition to the FTAA. The PQ hasn't even done that, and yet they showed up at the FTAA protest.

At the demonstration, Quebec flags were practically *de rigueur*. Some of the people waving these flags were well aware of the PQ's role in imposing austerity. But they saw this role more as a simple "betrayal" rather than an expression of the essentially bourgeois character of the PQ.

In fact, several sectors of the Quebec bourgeoisie support independence as a means to facilitate greater economic integration with the U.S. Other bourgeois *souverainistes* support greater ties to European capital by way of France. We do not know the precise degree to which these sectors divide their support between the PQ and the more openly bourgeois Bloc Québécois (BQ). But the BQ's electoral fortunes have been on the decline, largely because the PQ has, over the course of the 80's and 90's, proven that it can effectively administer austerity to Quebecois workers when it is not being pressured by mass struggles, as it was during the 1970's.

Several protestors have claimed in internet postings that the various types of nationalism present did not visibly hamper the unity in action of the demonstrators. But while it is true that people weren't fighting in the streets over what language they spoke or what side of the 49th parallel they came from, nationalism did in fact hamper unity in action.

The most glaring obstacle to unity was the sabotage by the union bureaucracy. Not only do the bureaucrats share the nationalism of parties like the NDP and the PQ (the NDP historically has had very little support in Quebec due to the chauvinist stands on Quebec self-determination taken by many of its leaders), but in many cases, they serve as part of the machinery of these parties. As nationalists, they see free-trade agreements and austerity measures as betrayals of an imaginary social partnership, but also they see the reconstitution of that partnership as being an essential part of any "serious" strategy to oppose the attacks. Mass action that might scare the politicians and the capitalists by threatening the stability of the state is to be shunned. That militant demonstrators, some of whom had nationalist notions of their own, were left stranded on the hilltops due to the treason of the union bureaucrats is intimately related to the pro-capitalist nationalism of those bureaucrats.

The fight to build an internationalist revolutionary party of the working class cannot be won without politically challenging the misleaderships of our class — from the union bureaucrats and reformist party leaders who are devoted to capitalism's survival, to the centrists who serve as errand boys and girls for those bureaucrats who know how to talk left, to the autonomists who are content to leave leadership of the masses in the reformists' hands. The role of genuine revolutionary communists is to lead our class in the decisive struggles that have the power to create a new socialist society. ●

Class Struggle on the Rise in Australia

Socialist Alliance Prepares Reformist Dead-End

Below we reprint a slightly edited version of COFI's bulletin distributed at May Day protests in Melbourne, Australia. An "M1" protest was first called by left groups to build on the "S11" protests against the World Economic Forum in Melbourne last September. The stock exchange was chosen to be the target of the protests.

The central union leaders were initially against supporting the protests. But pressure from the ranks of workers forced them to call a stop work — the first time workers have struck in recognition of May Day in Australia since the Vietnam War — and a rally, which they said would be separate from the one planned for the stock exchange.

At planning meetings a COFI supporter joined Workers Power (WP) comrades in arguing that after rallying at the stock exchange the M1 protesters should march to the union rally to join with the workers. Shamefully, the motion was voted down by the biggest groups involved — the Democratic Socialist Party (DSP), the International Socialist Organization (ISO), and its dissident-Cliffite splinter Socialist Alternative (SA). Their priority was a protest that would win the symbolic victory of shutting down the stock exchange, rather than promoting united working class struggle that could win real victories.

As it turned out, fearful of massive protests the police had already shut down and cordoned off the stock exchange themselves. The union leaders led 5000 workers through the streets of the city, protesting at various corporate headquarters. But as we warned in our leaflet, they made sure that the workers did not take any action that could encourage further struggles. For example, our leaflet encouraged a united action to shut down the headquarters of Yallourn Power and Energy (YP&E), which was currently involved in a key battle with power workers. But when the march reached the YP&E headquarters where power workers were rallying with the expectation that the marching union members would join them, the bureaucrats made sure that the march kept going past them.

The union march eventually reached the stock exchange, whereupon the thousands of M1 protesters there joined the march. When the bureaucrats tried to lead the march to an end in a park, the M1 leaders attempted to lead the march further. But instead of opposing the union bureaucrats' desire for a purely passive march, the M1 leaders' "alternative" was to continue with more of the same marching. In the ensuing confusion, some workers chose to continue the march, while most left.

FIGHTING REFORMISM

Our leaflet was the only one distributed that connected the need to break the union bureaucrats' grip on the protests and take decisive action, with the need to build a revolutionary party leadership that could do the same in the class struggle in general.

Our assessment of the Socialist Alliance, recently formed by the DSP, ISO, SA, WP and others to contest elections in Australia, was confirmed by the role played by these groups in the protests. The Socialist Alliance is not a real break with the Labor Party and its union bureaucracy that hold back workers' struggles, but represents a more militant version of the same reformist political views. ●

Let's Make "M1" the Start of the Workers' Fightback!

Today's protests are a great chance to start a massive fightback against the bosses' attacks. Students are striking and joining the protests. Pressure from rank and file workers has forced the bureaucrats who run Trades Hall to accept an historic stop work on May Day to join the struggle. While the bureaucrats have tried to limit the stop work as much as possible, it's still a great step forward. But we shouldn't stop there!

DON'T LET THE BUREAUCRATS STOP US

Trades Hall leaders Leigh Hubbard and Brian Boyd no doubt hope that after we've let off steam for a couple of hours they can send us back to work. There's even talk that the bureaucrats will stop workers from uniting with the M1 protesters if there are clashes with the police. Damn cowards! If the police attack the M1 protesters, the protesters will need our help to defend themselves. In any event, we'll have the biggest effect if the union march joins with the protesters in a united show of force.

Workers should defy the bureaucrats and stay at the protests. If we stay and take action to shut down at least one of the targets of today's protest (like the stock exchange or YP&E offices) we'll send the message that it's time to stop just complaining about layoffs, pay cuts and the slashing of social services, and time to start the mass struggle to defeat these attacks; that it's time to throw the whole weight of the union movement behind the struggles of the Yallourn power workers and all other workers who are fighting back. Through decisive action, we can send the message

that whether there's a Liberal or Labor government after the next Federal elections, we'll fight to smash the Workplace Relations Act (WRA) and the Goods and Services Tax (GST), to end the anti-immigrant offensive and racist attacks on Aboriginal people.

Today marks the first time in decades that the Australian labor movement has taken stop work action on May Day. Let's make it a truly historic day that will be remembered as the day we started to turn the tide against the bosses' attacks.

SEATTLE - S11 - M1

We're hardly alone in this struggle. May Day actions are taking place not just in cities across Australia, but in other countries as well. Indeed recent years have seen massive struggles against imperialist "globalization," privatization and "free trade" attacks, mostly in "Third World" countries. Massive protests and general strikes have recently shaken Argentina, Bolivia and India. In Ecuador, workers and peasants have used mass strikes and uprisings to topple one government after another in response to attempts to open the economy to greater imperialist exploitation. General strikes and riots have similarly broken out in response to IMF and World Bank policies, from Indonesia to Zimbabwe.

The powerful imperialist countries like the U.S. and their junior partners like Australia have not been hit by such explosive struggles yet. But today's actions do follow the militant protests against the



"M1" Protesters in Melbourne, Australia.

World Economic Forum (WEF) in Melbourne last year. Indeed they are part of a series of "anti-globalization" and "anti-capitalist" protests that began in Seattle in 1999, and have taken place in many other cities since, most recently with the massive protests against the Free Trade Area of the Americas summit in Quebec.

Seattle was so inspiring because anti-World Trade Organization (WTO) protesters were joined by a massive mobilization of workers. Union leaders had mobilized tens of thousands of their members with the aim of only having a passive march separate from the other protests. But many of the workers wanted a real fightback, and broke from the assigned route of the march to join protesters blocking the streets around the WTO conference. The union bureaucrats lost control and the repressive apparatus of the state was taken by surprise. The workers united with the protesters and succeeded in shutting the conference down. (See our "Battle Over Seattle," in *PR* No. 60.)

COPS AND BUREAUCRATS AGAINST THE MOVEMENT

Since then, the state has learned its lesson, and is no longer taken by surprise. Every protest in every country since has seen escalating shows of armed force by the state. At S11, baton-wielding cops beat protesters, charged them with horses, and ran over them with cars and motorcycles. Last month in Quebec City, protesters were met by six miles of steel fencing and thousands of riot police firing water cannon, rubber bullets and nerve gas!

The union bureaucrats have also learned their lesson. They avoid mobilizing masses of workers, and when they are forced to, they try to keep the workers under the tightest control and if at all possible separate them from the youth. We saw this with S11 where Hubbard refused to allow the workers' rally to cross the river to join the protesters. Boyd also threatened to impose his brand of discipline on the protests and then bussed in workers to break the picket set up on S11. It couldn't be clearer that the pro-capitalist union bureaucrats are the bosses' police inside the working class, just as the real cops wait outside with their batons, guns and tear gas.

The Trades Hall bureaucrats are up to the same tricks today. At first, the Trades Hall leaders wanted to have nothing to do with the May Day protests. Then, when pressure from the ranks forced them to come out in support of the planned actions, they did nothing to build for them. And they still hope to keep the workers under their control today.

In this way, just as in the day-to-day struggles of workers, the union bureaucracy is the chief barrier to an effective fightback against the capitalist attacks. But the example of Seattle shows what great things can be achieved if workers break free of the constraints of their bureaucratic misleaders, and take matters into their own hands.

FOR A GENERAL STRIKE!

Today's action is perfectly timed to start the fightback the working class needs. Probably the most important struggle being waged right now is that of the Yallourn power workers. Facing demands that they agree to a contract that would allow the bosses to change wages and working conditions at a whim, the workers launched a six-week go-slow and a four-hour work stoppage last year. Since then, however, their struggle has been trapped in the courts.

But the chains come off the Yallourn workers on May 2, when they can legally take industrial action again. A powerful, united rally today that sends the message that union members are ready to back the Yallourn workers would be a big boost to the struggle. It would also encourage La Trobe Valley miners, who are considering industrial action against the proposed use of contractors in the mines.

Moreover, the bosses' main weapon against workers in the La Trobe Valley is the same one they're using against all workers: the WRA. The current wave of mass retrenchments and lockouts are all made possible by the WRA. This general attack by the bosses needs a united response by the working class — a general strike.

A general strike would hit the bosses' profits and demonstrate to the working class the power it has when it is united in struggle. Turning today's stop work into an all-out united protest will show

workers' determination to fight, and help spread the idea of a general strike. An indefinite general strike — one that continues until victory, and not a symbolic strike — could smash the WRA and the GST.

But the inspiring general strike of 1992 against the Kennett-Liberal government, and the powerful strike and mass pickets of the MUA struggle of 1998, show that for as long as workers fight under treacherous pro-capitalist leaders, their struggles remain vulnerable to betrayal and defeat. Struggles like today's, however, can give the most militant and politically advanced workers and youth the confidence and experience to start building the new leadership that our class needs.

LABOR NO ALTERNATIVE TO LIBERALS

The union bureaucrats' response to workers' demands for a general strike will be the same one they always use: wait to elect a Labor government.

Labor looks set to win power later this year. One reason is that Howard's Liberals are so widely hated. But another is that the bosses have largely given up on the Liberals, and are backing Labor strongly, including donating millions more to the ALP's election campaign than to the Liberals.

The bosses hope a Labor government will continue to implement the Liberals' WRA and GST, while using its control of the unions to head off the rising level of strikes and protests. Of course Beazley's doing his best to reassure the bosses' that his ALP won't let them down. He refuses to commit the ALP to overturning the WRA or the GST.

What can be expected from a Federal Labor government can be seen in the current policies of State Labor governments. In Victoria, Bracks's ALP governs in the traditions of Kennett. With a record budget surplus, Bracks refuses to reverse past budget cuts to health care, education and other social services. And Bracks will no doubt mobilize the cops to violently confront today's protests, as he did against the S11 protests last year. In NSW, Labor is mounting an historic attack on workers' compensation rights. Labor retained power in Western Australia and won office in Queensland thanks to a massive rejection of the Liberals, but also thanks in part to running on a racist, anti-working class program of mandatory sentencing and killing native title rights.

Labor may be the party of the unions and in that way a workers' party. But its policies and leadership are no less capitalist than the Liberals'. Nonetheless, most militant workers hope that by ousting the Liberals and putting Labor in power, they will face a government that won't fight them like the Howard government did, and will even make concessions if enough pressure is brought to bear.

Revolutionaries have to join with their fellow workers in voting for Labor in order to use the experience of voting them into office to prove that the ALP is no solution to their problems. Workers must be warned that they will face further attacks from a Beazley government, just as they did under Hawke and Keating. In this way revolutionaries can convince workers that to fight the bosses and win, they must break from the ALP and build a revolutionary party dedicated to the overthrow of the entire capitalist system.

FOR A REVOLUTIONARY PARTY!

The working class has to break out of the cycle of betrayal in parliament at the hands of Labor, and on the picket line at the hands of the union bureaucrats. The Labor hacks hold back and sell out our struggles because they rely on the capitalist system for their privileged positions. Their pay and power depend on their position as brokers between the working class and the capitalists. So as the economic crisis deepens and the capitalists must cut jobs and wages and intensify exploitation, the Labor hacks must try to help the bosses implement these attacks and hold back our struggles against them. At the same time, when attacks from above, or workers' anger from below, go so far as to threaten their privileged positions, they must at least make a show of putting up a fight against the bosses.

The only leadership that can be relied on to lead our class's

struggles forward and not sell out is one that won't compromise with the capitalists because it is dedicated to their overthrow — a revolutionary socialist leadership. Such a leadership won't come from intellectual saviors from above, but rather from the efforts of the most class conscious vanguard workers. The fight to build a revolutionary party will be greatly advanced by the success of mass struggles like today's. As the working class begins to sense its power, more and more workers will start to see the possibility of not just struggling to defeat the capitalists' attacks, but to overthrow their entire system and replace it with a socialist society of plenty and freedom.

FOR SOCIALIST REVOLUTION!

There is no need for hunger, homelessness and all the other shortages that are used to force workers and poor to fight one another like dogs. Capitalism has built up a world economy of such capacity that there is no need for the scarcity of jobs, goods and social services anywhere. If the world economy was liberated from the shackles of producing for private profit, and instead directed toward producing for what people need, there would be an abundance for all.

A classless, cooperative socialist world cleansed of all

oppression can be built. But the capitalists and their lackeys will not give up without a fight. Their practically military response to simple protests like this one makes that obvious. Capitalist rule will have to be overthrown by revolutions that smash the capitalist state and put the working class in power.

To offer effective leadership to today's struggles for workers' most immediate needs and to link them to the aim of overthrowing capitalism, a revolutionary party is needed. To lead such an international struggle, the most politically advanced and militant workers in each country must join together to build revolutionary parties as sections of a world revolutionary party, a re-created Trotskyist Fourth International. Only with such a disciplined, united leadership will the vanguard workers of the world be able to lead the struggle for world socialist revolution to victory.

The Communist Organization for the Fourth International's supporters in Australia want to begin a discussion of these ideas with revolutionary-minded workers and youth. The huge class struggles that are developing will provide fantastic opportunities to build the genuinely revolutionary socialist leadership our class needs. Get in contact with us. There's no time to waste! ●

Socialist Alliance: New Reformist Trap

With Labor set to win the next election, Beazley's ALP refuses to commit itself to overturning the Liberals' most hated policies: the WRA and the GST. Meanwhile State Labor governments are pressing ahead with anti-working class attacks. No wonder the ALP no longer has the support it once did among militant workers.

Supposedly to provide an anti-capitalist alternative to Labor, a number of socialist groups have come together to launch the Socialist Alliance (SA), which plans on running in the upcoming Federal elections. Led by the Democratic Socialist Party (DSP) and the International Socialist Organization (ISO), the SA includes a number of other socialist groups and is supported by some union leaders, like AMWU Victorian State Secretary, Craig Johnston.

The idea that these socialist groups have solved their differences and formed a party to challenge Labor could be an exciting prospect to some revolutionary-minded workers and youth. But if so, they will be sorely disappointed.

WHAT ABOUT THE "R" WORD?

The SA says it will bring the "s word" — socialism — back into the mainstream. It may. But you can be sure that it won't do the same for the "r word" — revolution. The SA's draft platform features a grab-bag of policies for reform. But nowhere does it mention that to achieve all these reforms and build socialism, capitalism will have to be overthrown by means of revolution. No, the SA draft platform stands for the reform of capitalism.

ADDING OBSTACLES TO MASS STRUGGLE

United socialist tickets with reformist programs supposedly acceptable to the largest number of people have been tried many times and most often fail to get significant support. One reason is that when given the choice between big reformist parties like Labor who could potentially wield power and be pushed to make concessions, and pip-squeak reformist socialists, most workers will follow their common sense, hold their noses, and vote for the big guys.

But worse, such campaigns are an obstacle to the mass struggles workers need. Whenever workers try to launch a struggle against the bosses, the main obstacle they face is the trade union bureaucracy which holds them back and betrays them. But led by the DSP and the ISO — two groups that cheerlead for the union bureaucrats and never expose them — the SA has no intention of preparing workers for the struggles they face against the union bureaucracy.

Furthermore, while it says it's for workers' struggles to win their demands, the SA's platform doesn't feature a call for the key form of struggle workers need to build to unite their struggles and beat back the bosses' attacks — a general strike.

NOT INTERNATIONALIST

We have many other disagreements with the SA's draft program and will provide a full analysis of it in a future issue. But one point that can not escape mention is that despite opposing globalization and Howard's military expansion and being in favor of world peace, it is not genuinely internationalist. It obviously doesn't explain that the overthrow of Australian capitalism is essential for the liberation of the South East Asian masses from one of their imperialist oppressors. And it doesn't promote the creation of a world party of socialist revolution through which genuine internationalism is possible.

The SA's draft platform also doesn't address concrete struggles against Australian imperialism — with good reason. Opposing Australian military intervention in Asia is an elementary principle for genuine socialists. But the SA doesn't clearly take up the issue since one of its leading groups, the DSP, took the pro-imperialist position of supporting Australian military intervention in East Timor, rejecting the internationalist strategy of fighting for the arming of the East Timorese and Indonesian masses against the Indonesian dictatorship. What sort of leadership can be expected from a pseudo-party that would split over the question of supporting Australian imperialism?

The working class doesn't need another reformist party. It needs an internationalist revolutionary party. Only such a party can link today's struggles against the bosses, to the struggle to overthrow this rotten capitalist system.

Sometimes a mass movement of workers leads toward creating a new party. Under such circumstances revolutionaries can join the movement and in the course of the struggle seek to convince workers that the party should be based on a revolutionary program. But the SA is not the product of such a movement. Rather, it is a manoeuvre of relatively small socialist groups hoping to get rich quick by recruiting people to a watered down program. In this situation, it is the duty of revolutionaries to show the bankruptcy such an approach, and do all they can to stop the creation of another reformist obstacle to revolution. ●

LRP/COFI

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Canada, to join at least 60,000 others to protest the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA). The protests are analyzed in our article on page 9. We distributed several thousand copies of our anti- FTAA bulletin, *For Socialist Revolution to End Capitalist Misery! Down With Imperialist "Free Trade"!* (see our website) in both English and French.

CHICAGO LRP

In Chicago we have continued to be very active in the Chicago Teachers Union (CTU), where an LRP supporter is an elected delegate. We have focused on using regular delegate meetings to distribute bulletins and raise calls for struggle against racist and anti-working class attacks against both teachers and students.

A new opportunity to take forward this struggle arose in May when a group of Mexican parents launched a hunger strike to protest Mayor Daley and the Board of Education's refusal to deliver on their promises to address the crisis of overcrowding by building a new high school. Our comrade quickly issued a petition of support for the struggle which was signed by hundreds of students and teachers and presented to the parents. Our comrade later raised a motion for mass action to support the parents' demand, but the leader of the local's main opposition group, Pro-Active Chicago Teachers and School Employees (PACT), joined with the leadership to end the discussion without a vote.

Significantly, in the union's elections in May, the entrenched bureaucratic leadership headed by Tom Reece was defeated by PACT. Decisive in this result was Mayor Daley's threat to extend school "re-engineering" (layoffs, privatization, underfunding) beyond high schools to the elementary schools, Reece's central base of support. With Daley actually campaigning for Reece's election, many teachers who previously supported Reece turned to PACT, which has made rhetorical commitments to oppose such attacks. Teachers did not see a vote for PACT as a demand for mass action against the attacks – rather they hoped PACT would stand up to the attacks on behalf of teachers. PACT's long record of inaction in the face of such attacks means these hopes will be disappointed.

We attended the ISO's annual Summer School in June. In several of the school's sessions, we made the central point that a key responsibility of revolutionaries is to expose the role of the pro-capitalist misleaders of the working class, something the ISO refuses to do. We also emphasized the struggle for working-class independence from the capitalists and why genuine Marxists never politically support outright bourgeois and middle-class parties, as the ISO did with Nader's Greens in the last election and with the ANC in South Africa.

We drew applause from many participants in a session on racism, where we argued against the ISO's aristocratic line that white workers do not benefit from Black workers' oppression. We pointed out that the Marxist tradition, from Marx and Engels through Lenin and Trotsky, always argued that aristocratic workers receive short-term benefits from other workers' superexploitation, benefits that blind them from their fundamental interest in uniting with their oppressed brothers and sisters in a struggle against the capitalist system. Only a leadership that highlights this significance of racist oppression, rather than downplaying it the way the ISO does, could lead the way toward working-class unity.

We also distributed an open letter to ISO members written by former members of the ISO who now support the LRP. It put forward a general analysis of the ISO's politics, concentrating on the ISO's habitual cheerleading for reformist misleaders of the working class. (See our website.) We made a number of contacts with people around the ISO and hope our ideas will have a positive long-term effect on others.

Our supporter in Minneapolis has continued to be actively

involved in protests against police brutality and building the campaign to free Mumia Abu-Jamal.

INTERNATIONAL WORK

Ukraine

We have continued to conduct a written political discussion with the Revolutsiyina Robitnycha Organyzatsiya (Revolutionary Workers Organization) in Ukraine. Comrades of the LRP visited the RWO this spring as a step toward working out a common political perspective. The RWO is an organization of young workers founded after Ukraine became an independent country following the collapse of the USSR in 1991; its founding members discovered Trotsky's writings at that time. It has since been hardened in significant labor struggles. We have already published an article by the RWO on the Ukrainian scene in *PR 61*. We are optimistic that continued discussion and collaboration will confirm that the LRP (COFI) and the RWO share a common political world view and will unite in the struggle to re-create the Fourth International.

Germany

In Germany, our comrades joined in demonstrations in defense of Turkish political prisoners on hunger strike, and against the Slovak police persecution of the Roma anti-fascist Mario Bango in Berlin. We had literature stands at the May Day rally and at an anti-globalization demonstration in Bonn. We participated in a demonstration in solidarity with the July protests against the G8 Summit in Genoa. We also attended the annual festival sponsored by Lutte Ouvrière outside Paris. A new volume of *KOVI-Dokumente* is available (see box below).

Australia

In Australia, our comrade participated actively in the May Day protests, which followed last year's large protests against the World Economic Forum in Melbourne. About 10,000 protesters organized by various left organizations converged at the Melbourne stock exchange and were joined by another 5000 unionists. While pressure from the ranks forced the union bureaucrats to mobilize for a rally, they succeeded in preventing the union members from joining with the other "anti-globalization" protesters in a united march. Our comrade distributed a bulletin (see page 13) which addressed the issues of the anti-globalization protests and the need for a working-class struggle against the capitalist attacks and for socialism. The bulletin also analyzed the Socialist Alliance (SA) — the reformist pseudo-party recently formed by various left groups, principally the Democratic Socialist Party and the International Socialist Organisation. ●

KOVI-Dokumente VI (März 2001)

Kommunistische Organisation für die Vierte Internationale

- Internationalismus vs. Zionismus und Antisemitismus: eine E-mail-Diskussion mit einem 'antinationalen' Freund (A.Holberg)
- Thesen zur jüdischen Frage (Dokumente der Sitzung des Nationalen Komitees der SWP in New York, 22. bis 25. April 1938)
- Die Vertreibung der Deutschen aus dem Osten: Antifaschismus oder Chauvinismus? (A.Rémy)

Preis: DM 3,50 (plus DM 1,50 Porto)

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KOVI Website: http://www.lrp-cofi.org/KOVI_BRD

e-mail: KOVI.BRD@t-online.de

Cincinnati

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response to Thomas's murder changed the scene.

This anger forced the community's most prominent leader, Rev. Damon Lynch III of the Black United Front, to join Thomas's mother, Angela Leisure, in a march of hundreds to City Hall the day after the murder. But the masses soon made clear that they wanted a struggle that went far beyond what Lynch was prepared to lead. When Mayor Charles Luken and Police Chief Thomas Streicher denied responsibility and City Council members claimed there was little they could do, the angry crowd took over City Hall, pushing the politicians around, breaking windows, bringing down the American flag and forcing the mayor to escape out the back door.

In an attempt to regain control, Lynch then tried to lead a peaceful protest at police headquarters. But the crowd, which swelled to over a thousand, disregarded him. This time they brought down the cops' American flag and re-flew it upside down and threw stones and bottles at the headquarters and at the surrounding cops. The windows and main entrance to the headquarters were smashed. Eventually the protesters were forced to retreat when the cops opened fire on them with tear gas and potentially-deadly "bean-bag" bullets (bags packed with metal shot fired from shotguns).

The next day Lynch tried to lead a "peace march." "His aim," the *Cincinnati Enquirer* explained, "was to rein in the violence that had broken out among the young people the night before." But the protesters who joined him had other ideas, coming with homemade placards bearing slogans like "No Justice, No Peace," and "Time to Shoot Back." When a young protester gave the finger to the cops, one cop with a shotgun ran toward him while the rest beat their riot shields with their batons. Lynch intervened and struck an agreement with the cops to lead the march back to his church. But when he tried to lead the protesters away, most refused to follow and instead stayed and fought pitched battles with the police for hours. Once again the protesters rejected their leaders' calls for peace without justice, breaking windows and setting fires to make their point. The leaders were now powerless to hold them back.

Mayor Luken had agreed to meet Rev. Lynch at his church to join in the calls for peace. But as he was driving there, the protesters spotted him. Shouts of "Get the hell out!" rose up and the crowd chased him away. The rebellion was on. Stores were looted, rocks were thrown at cops. One night protesters even attempted to set fire to a neighborhood police station.

ESTABLISHMENT LEADERS OPPOSE REBELLION

The protesters had rejected Lynch's pleas for peace two days in a row. But Cincinnati's rulers still hoped to use Lynch and his fellow misleaders to quell the upheaval. So the next day Mayor Luken met with clergy and church elders to enlist them in his efforts. "We're begging for your help," he said.

For about twenty minutes the clergy were able to go along with Luken, but as a Black city official began to speak, a young woman jumped up from her seat. "Why is he standing up for the chief?" she shouted. "He's here to answer to us." Her words set off the crowd in attendance, who shouted down the Mayor and the leaders trying to cooperate with him. Some of the clergy left in frustration. Others, knowing they were being exposed as collaborators with the city's rulers, said they'd campaign for an end to the rioting, but not alongside the police. "We do the work of God," said one, "not the Cincinnati Police Department."

That submission to the preachers' God in heaven means submission to the police here on earth soon became clear. Just hours after the Mayor's failed meeting with the community leaders, a demonstration of Black youth headed downtown. When a line of cops fully armed in riot gear formed across the street to prevent the marchers from going further, Lynch and other clergy coming from meeting the mayor linked arms in another line some twenty yards



Ministers who formed shield to stop march on police are confronted by protesters. Rejection of sellout leaders was central to rebellion.

ahead to stop the march from reaching the cops, claiming they wanted to prevent protesters from giving the cops an excuse to brutalize them. With a thin line of self-appointed "leaders" standing in their way, many of the marchers denounced the sellouts, pointing their fingers, shaking their fists and shouting. But eventually they gave up trying to get past. (See photo above.)

Note that the preachers weren't saying, "Wait, we're not organized and prepared to confront the police yet; let's save ourselves for another day when we're ready." Their perspective is that the oppressed should not attempt to defeat their oppressors but should peacefully pressure them for reforms.

The Black working class, particularly the youth, fought for a militant political direction, at a time when the community's "establishment" proved useless. As a sign at Timothy's funeral read: "We Salute Our Youth: Thank You for the Revolution." Had there been in place an organized revolutionary leadership, the negative aspects of rioting could have been minimized and the full force of the masses' rage unleashed against the seats of capitalist power.

As it was, the rebellion did degenerate into rioting. Buildings were randomly vandalized and set afire. A handful of white people were attacked when they drove through Black neighborhoods, some because they were yuppies frequenting the strip of bars that encroach on Over-the-Rhine; others, including activists who wanted to solidarize with the rebellion, simply because of their skin color.

The most militant street fighters, who had not yet achieved revolutionary class consciousness nor had the experience to see the importance of mass action, could not answer the ruling class's violent response. When a state of emergency was declared, thousands of police were mobilized to enforce a curfew that denied Black people the elementary right to walk the streets at night. People were sprayed with tear gas, beaten and arrested, and shot at from point-blank range with "bean-bag" guns. Not even Timothy Thomas's funeral was safe from the police, who fired into the peaceful gathering. During the state of emergency, more than 800 people were arrested, most of them Black.

MASSES CONDEMN SELLOUT LEADERS

Turning to police state measures to crush the rebellion, the ruling class still needed a democratic facade to cover up their crackdown. But with the local Black leadership too compromised in the eyes of the protesters to be able to perform their role, national leaders - the NAACP's Kweisi Mfume and Rev. Al Sharpton - rushed in to do the job. While they sincerely complained about racist police brutality and injustice, their strategy is to peacefully reform the system, and they oppose any struggle that threatens it. So they immediately called on the masses to end the uprising and respect the state of emergency.

But such was the commitment of the most radical of the Black youth that not even these "revered leaders" escaped criticism. Thus on

April 16 when Sharpton visited a local church to speak, youth gathered outside with their faces covered by bandanas to protect their identity and criticized Sharpton and the other establishment leaders.

Later that day, at a youth forum on police brutality, these criticisms were given even clearer expression. Hundreds attended and cheered speeches that connected the continued racist police terror with the failure of the established leaders to lead a struggle. "Our Black leaders are not leading us," explained 14-year-old Derrick Blassingame. "Some of our Black leaders just want their faces on TV. They are in this for four things only: reputation, power, politics and money." While some older leaders complained that the youth should show more respect for their elders, many others in the audience, particularly the youth, agreed with the criticisms. Another speaker, for example, added, "Some leaders will only go so far in battle and then turn around and go home. So now we're the soldier-leaders."

We don't know much more about the political views of those speakers, but they were right to criticize the establishment leaders. These leaders sell out because they are committed to the system that relies on oppression and exploitation to maintain itself. While most of them no doubt hate racism, their perspective goes no further than using protests to win reforms that give them a bigger slice of political power — at the cost of really fighting that racism. Some just want the slice.

The struggle needs a new leadership that won't compromise with the system. An authentic revolutionary party, dedicated to the overthrow of capitalism, is the only leadership that won't end up compromising with the capitalist system and selling out struggles.

That new leadership will primarily come from the working-class youth like those who led Cincinnati's rebellion.

BACK TO BUSINESS AS USUAL

In comparison to other cities, Cincinnati's ruling class has long felt so secure that it has made little effort to fund bureaucratic programs to strengthen the existing Black leadership's ability to control the masses. That leadership is tied to the system but has proved too weak to hold back the struggle. Now, with the rebellion over, the discredited Black establishment is seeking to resurrect itself and use the threat of future upheavals as a bargaining chip for concessions from the still very reluctant ruling class.

Democratic Mayor Luken and Republican Ohio Governor Bob Taft, along with the heads of Chiquita Brands and Procter & Gamble, set up a race relations commission — "Cincinnati Community Action Now." Rev. Lynch quickly accepted a position as one of three co-chairs of the Commission (the other two are corporate executives, one Black, one white), to improve economic opportunities for minorities. That the Commission included the racist cop leader Keith Fangman (see the box below) should have exposed the ruling class's intention that it be another tool for holding back mass struggle. But that didn't stop Lynch from praising Luken's commission, saying that the Mayor still has the confidence of the Black community.

Even the Commission's promise to create 3000 summer jobs for Black youth has already proven to be a lie. Only 1500 temporary positions were offered, and 1000 of those were "created" by shifting funds from an already operating jobs program

Exploitation and Oppression Behind the Rebellion

The anger over Timothy Thomas's cold-blooded murder was intensified by the conditions of Black life in Cincinnati. Cincinnati is home to some of America's biggest multinational corporations: Procter & Gamble, Kroger's Supermarkets, Federated Department Stores and Chiquita Brands. Ford and General Electric have plants there. But while these companies have recorded record profits in recent years, Cincinnati's working class has been hit hard by mass layoffs and cuts in social services.

The racist rulers save the worst attacks for Black people. Mostly crammed into inner-city neighborhoods like Over-the-Rhine (where Thomas lived and died), West End, Avondale and Bond Hill, Black people in these neighborhoods endure mass unemployment (officially over 30 percent in Over-the-Rhine versus 4 percent for whites city-wide). The average annual income of \$5,359 in Over-the-Rhine is just 37 percent of Cincinnati's as a whole, and 95 percent of people in these neighborhoods live below the official poverty line.

Black children are forced into underfunded and crumbling schools in an almost totally segregated education system. Budget cuts to health care have spread suffering and death throughout the working class — indicated, for example, by skyrocketing infant mortality rates, with an increase of 12 percent in 1998 alone.

As with every poor working-class neighborhood, atop these conditions of grinding exploitation and desperate poverty stands a brutal police force looking to keep the population permanently intimidated so they don't even think about fighting against injustice. In a city that is 43 percent Black, the police force is 75 percent white, and it spares no opportunity to harass Black people. A recent study of "racial profiling" by Cincinnati police found that Black people are ticketed for almost 80 percent of all traffic citations, for example.

Over-the-Rhine has been particularly hit by such harassment. Located near downtown, it has been opened up to "business development" and gentrification. A strip of bars and restaurants as well as luxury homes on the hill overlooking the

neighborhood have been developed. To encourage "business confidence," a city ordinance declares the neighborhood a "Crime Exclusion Zone," meaning that anyone brought up on drug or prostitution charges would be immediately exiled from the area and not allowed to return for 90 days; a year if convicted. Thus people wrongly charged were still banished from their neighborhood or jailed for entering it!

Five minutes from Kentucky, Cincinnati combines the worst of Northern big capitalist exploitation with the worst of Southern racist traditions. It is no coincidence that while the bourgeoisie built a playground of riverside development and modern sports and entertainment stadiums, for most of the past decade, the Ku Klux Klan — protected by the police — has made a point of erecting a cross every Christmas season in Fountain Square, the heart of the city's business district.

The openly Nazi-loving Marge Schott was too much of an embarrassment to the bourgeoisie and was forced to give up her ownership of the Cincinnati Reds baseball team. But outright racism flourishes in positions of more practical importance. After Police Chief Streicher referred to a Black cop as a "nigger" in a training program, demands for his resignation were ignored.

Most outrageous is Keith Fangman, head of the Cincinnati Fraternal Order of Police (FOP). Following protests over Thomas's murder, Fangman took pains to deny that the cops are, in his words, "a band of rogue Nazis roaming around Cincinnati hunting Black men" — a necessary denial, since the Cincinnati police are actually riddled with Klansmen, Nazis and other racist scum. During the rebellion on April 18, Fangman himself received the thanks of Richard Barrett, head of the Mississippi-based neo-Nazi Nationalist Movement, which advocates "Jews to Israel, Puerto Ricans to Puerto Rico, Negroes to Africa, Orientals to the Orient." Barrett told the press that after a rebellion in Jackson, Mississippi, the cops adopted the slogan "you loot, we shoot." He met with Fangman and other cops to congratulate them for their similarly hard line "against the looters and terrorists." ●

so the Commission could take credit for them.

As if to make clear that Cincinnati's rulers' promises of reforms were lies, a grand jury indicted officer Roach on nothing more than misdemeanor charges. This travesty of justice was achieved by the state's prosecutor, Michael Allen, who acted as if he was the cop's defense lawyer. He explained the pathetic charges with the argument that Thomas may have appeared to be grabbing for a gun. But Thomas had no gun, and Mayor Luken admitted that even top cops didn't believe Roach's story. For misdemeanors, Thomas received the death penalty in the streets; for cold-blooded murder, Roach was wrist-slapped with misdemeanor charges. Such is justice in racist America.

Meanwhile Allen has thrown the book at the over 800 people arrested during the state of emergency. Bail was deliberately set so high that few could afford it. Judges have refused to accept plea deals or negotiate punishments, insisting on maximum jail sentences and massive fines.

Fearful of appearing to be nothing more than Luken's puppet, Lynch has led several small, tightly controlled civil disobedience protests. The mayor was soon forced to criticize Lynch publicly for leading a sit-down action after the grand jury decision. In response, Lynch complained that "the mayor has no idea what the people want." Despite their tiff, Lynch and Luken agree on preventing rebellion against the system. Given the separate followings they must cater to, their agreement cannot be smooth.

Central to all the establishment leaders' efforts is their promotion of various reforms of the Cincinnati police. Since the riots of 1967, Cincinnati has seen innumerable investigations, lawsuits and new laws, all of which have done nothing to stop rampant police racism, corruption and brutality. Their only real purpose was to confuse the masses and avoid mass struggles. The current reform proposals are no different.

Some of them are ridiculous. Lynch and others have, for example, called for the City Council to be able to hire a new police chief from out of town. Chief Streicher and every past racist police chief from the city's West Side are rightly hated, but that fact can't be allowed to trick people into supporting a fraudulent demand. Racist police brutality is at epidemic proportions in almost every city in the country. Where do they think they can get a "good" police chief from, Mars?

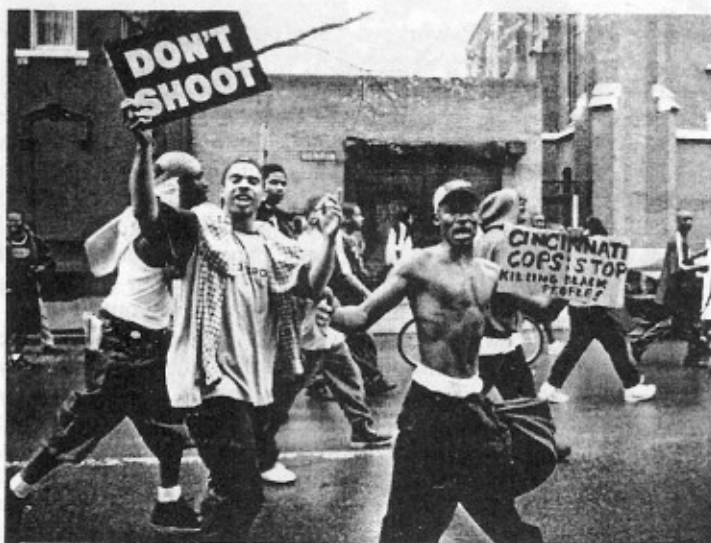
Also insulting are calls by all leaders from Lynch to Mfume and Sharpton for the federal Justice Department to reform the Cincinnati police. The Justice Department has a long record, under both Republican and Democratic administrations, of covering up police brutality. Now that it is headed by John Ashcroft, an admirer of the slave-holding Southern Confederacy, can anyone really believe in it?

Their demand for a Civilian Police Review Board with expanded powers may seem more serious. But the long experience of such review boards in many cities shows that they are at best powerless to prosecute and at worst end up covering up police atrocities. They are never really independent of the system; the only power to punish the cops remains in the hands of the courts, which by their very nature work hand-in-hand with the cops. (Get our pamphlet *Fight Police Terror!*, which examines the various proposals to reform the police and their record of failure in cities across the country.)

"SOCIALISTS" ON THE SIDELINES

In the Cincinnati events revolutionaries had a perfect opportunity to show how to fundamentally challenge the capitalist system that lies behind racist oppression, and to advance the building of the revolutionary communist party necessary for solving the crisis of leadership. But the socialist groups in Cincinnati, as well as many of those that traveled there in response to the struggle, had no answers to the questions raised by the struggle.

Genuine revolutionaries saw in the rebellion the seeds of a struggle against capitalism by the entire class, with Black youth taking the initiative. What was necessary was to join in the struggle and



Protest in Cincinnati against police terror. Youth were key to rebellion.

explain how the rebellion could become more organized and more focused against the ruling class. In this way, we would help develop a struggle of the whole working class against capitalism and the building of the revolutionary party. But the rebellion saw various socialist groups stay on the sidelines, some because of their sectarian attitude toward mass struggles, others because their normal opportunist practice of supporting sellout leaders was useless at a time when the militants were kicking such leaders out of the struggle.

The Progressive Labor Party (PLP) seemed very radical with its calls for communist revolution and denunciation of the liberals' fake solutions. PLP supported the rebellion and was able to immediately send members to Cincinnati. But they have no idea of how to unite with struggling workers and link propaganda for revolutionary ideas with proposals for how the masses can take the immediate struggle forward. Instead, as is often the case, their only practical suggestion was to urge the rebels on the streets to join PLP's May Day march - in Washington D.C.! (*Challenge*, April 21. For more on PLP, see our article in *PR* 57.)

The Spartacist League (SL) correctly pointed to the region's unionized work force as having a "direct and immediate interest in championing the defense of Cincinnati's black populace against the police onslaught." But the Spartacists believe that the unions must now stand "at the head of the ghetto masses" - even as they admit that the unions have not lifted a finger in support of the struggle. (*Workers Vanguard*, April 27.)

Beneath the SL's radical rhetoric, their calls for labor leadership at best mean that they want the struggle to be under the control of sellout bureaucrats - and at worst, they really mean that Black people should wait until they are joined by whites before defending themselves against racism. While the Black rebels were denouncing their sellout leaders and exploding in struggle, the SL did not suggest what was really necessary: that Black workers bring the struggle into the unions and fight the union bureaucracy by demanding union support for the struggle and raising anti-racist and class-wide demands for the most united struggle possible. Without a strategy for getting rid of the present leadership that is hostile to the rebellion, the idea of putting the unions "at the head" of the struggle can only be seen by the insurgents as absurd or racist patronization.

The one socialist organization with a real group in Cincinnati is the International Socialist Organization (ISO). But they were poorly prepared to meet the challenge of the rebellion. Given their orientation to college students, they hadn't attempted to forge strong links with the people of Over-the-Rhine and other oppressed neighborhoods. Their almost hermetic isolation from the most oppressed layers of the working class was only reinforced by the fact that they had spent much of the previous year campaigning for Ralph Nader, whose campaign held no appeal to oppressed and

super-exploited Black workers. (See our article on the Nader campaign in *PR 62*.)

ISO members no doubt solidarized with the rebellion and wanted to help advance it. But that would have meant a complete break with their organization's politics. For the ISO sent in veteran leader Lee Sustar, whose immediate reaction was to bolster the establishment community leaders. While the rebels were rejecting Rev. Lynch on the streets and in meetings, *Socialist Worker* (April 27) gave Lynch a box and a photo in the paper's centerfold spread to put forward his views without a word of criticism – including his dead-end call for hiring a new police chief from out of town.

In this historic struggle, the opportunist leaders of the ISO were found irrelevant and on the sidelines, just like the sectarians they habitually denounce. Their approach, as always, was to literally knock on the doors of the misleaders and offer an unspoken deal: we'll make you look good if you give us a place in the movement. Of course, having already been thrown out of the movement, Lynch couldn't deliver. In the end, the ISO did not even pretend to put forward a program for the struggle. One can scour every line of the six different articles in *Socialist Worker's* special supplement on Cincinnati without finding a single practical suggestion for continuing the rebellion!

LEFT OPPORTUNISM

The ISO joined other Cincinnati groups – including the Coalition for a Humane Economy, the Zapatista Coalition, Refuse and Resist!, the Greater Cincinnati Defend Mumia Abu-Jamal Coalition, the Solidarity socialist group, and Anti-Racist Action (ARA) – in signing a “statement of support for and solidarity with the African-American community,” which described itself as coming “principally from Cincinnati's white community.” The statement condemned police brutality and racism but urged hollow reforms. Echoing Lynch & Co., it proposed that the Cincinnati police department be “revamped from the top down. New people and ideas should be brought in from outside.” When phony reforms were being used to demobilize actual struggles, the ISO and others came out in support of the most inane of them all!

The support coalition, led by Dan LaBotz of Solidarity, called for a march against police brutality. Lynch was originally fearful of the idea, given his experience of being repeatedly rejected by the Black masses during the uprising. But he and other establishment leaders eventually agreed to support the march as an opportunity to resurrect themselves and assert their strategy of peacefully begging for reforms. They knew that the police crackdown, and the lack of direction afterward, had already dampened popular militancy. Therefore they expected that the original fighters would join the march only in small numbers, especially given its outsider leadership. What finally convinced the leaders that it was safe for them to support the march was the organizers' promises to police the march and keep it under control.

There was an uproar at the first organizing meetings for the march, where militant activists from groups like the ISO and ARA were shocked by the bureaucratic domination of the meeting by LaBotz and his new-found liberal friends. LaBotz & Co. made clear their role of policing for the leaders. Their flyer for the march, for example, insisted that it would be “peaceful” – six times in four paragraphs! In the same spirit, the city's bourgeoisie had bought billboard space on the expressways that surround the city for bright blue signs with one big word in white — “Peace.” Thus the ruling class, the establishment Black community leaders and even some “socialists” were all united in their opposition to the rebellion – which from any point of view was hardly peaceful.

Just how reactionary this was became clear when an LRPer spoke out against these plans at an organizing meeting in Over-the-Rhine shortly before the march. LaBotz explained that the organizers' insistence that the march be peaceful had been criticized by some in the movement; but it had been supported by the overwhelming majority of the organizers. An older white

organizer explained that the aim of the march was to attract the white middle class, and that displays of anger at the police or anything else should not be allowed because they would scare away such people. Marchers should remember, he concluded, that to win respect, we have to show respect.

Our comrade stated clearly that he believed the idea of a “peaceful” march was absolutely wrong because he agreed with the slogan “No Justice, No Peace.” At a time when Black people are being shot down in the streets, people should be angry – and any suggestion otherwise is appalling. Respect isn't won by treating the murderous cops with respect but by showing that you are serious about struggling for your rights.

The LRPer explained that he opposed the idea of a battle with the police under conditions where the protesters faced an overwhelming number of bloodthirsty cops, and that he certainly opposed a physical confrontation with the cops by white direct actionists at the march; that could only provoke a violent counterattack in which the racist cops would inevitably target Black people for the worst abuse. But, he continued, a demonstration doesn't have to be violent to be loud, angry and threatening to the ruling class. Promises of a peaceful protest reassure the powers-that-be that they won't be threatened, when that's exactly what the demonstration should do.

A line had been drawn, he continued: for or against the rebellion. If the march wasn't clearly a continuation of the rebellion; if it didn't demand an end to racist police brutality and the ouster of the politicians who cover for it; and if it didn't promise ever greater and more threatening struggles until those demands are won, it would be a betrayal of the uprising.

Our comrade's arguments were supported by a surprising number of the activists at the meeting. Later, LaBotz pulled our comrade aside to “talk some sense” into him. The march would be the first time white people had demonstrated against racism in Cincinnati's history, and nothing should be allowed to scare them away. Unions are being approached to support the march, he continued, and they won't with the kind of message you want to send. Thus, “the march should be up-beat, positive and optimistic. People should have smiles on their faces.” LaBotz was practically calling for a minstrel show.

To their credit, the “anarchists” and “anti-authoritarians” grouped in and around the ARA opposed the march organizers' insistence on “peace” from the beginning. They broke from the coalition and came out with a leaflet headlined “People Always Saying ‘Peace,’ We Say ‘First Justice, Then Peace’” that raised a number of fighting demands. This was a lot better than those who either joined the “peace” chorus or sat uncritically through coalition meetings. But as we will see, the ARA's anarchism and anti-authoritarianism offered no political program or strategy that could reach the rebellious Black youth and show how to take on the entire capitalist system of exploitation and oppression.

MARCH FOR PEACE WITHOUT JUSTICE?

The march, which took place June 2, attracted some 2000 participants. But the Black youth who rebelled in April clearly didn't think it was for them. The majority of the marchers were white, and of the thousands of Black youth who protested and fought in the streets in early April, it looked like no more than a couple of dozen marched. Of the hundreds of Black people who attended, most were older and had not taken any part in the rebellion. As one marcher noted, the Black youth felt doubly “dissed” by the march organizers: disrespected and disinvited.

LaBotz and his partners did their best to resurrect the establishment leaders. But they still only received a lackluster response from the leaders they coveted. Rev. Lynch promised to speak but in the end did not even attend, citing a more important obligation. A lesser Black United Front figure, Jackie Shropshire, co-chaired the march, and Lynch sent his father to speak in his place. The Cincinnati Central Labor Council predictably refused to

endorse the march. But the organizers succeeded in winning endorsement from two Services Employees (SEIU/1199) union locals, three federal government workers' (AFGE) locals, two electrical workers (UE) locals and the Farm Labor Organizing Committee, (FLOC-AFL-CIO). Typically, however, these endorsements did not mean that the unions mobilized their membership to attend.

Angela Leisure made a moving speech, and a couple of youth speakers fired up the crowd, but nothing could hide the fact that the rally had little to do with the rebellion. One after another of the discredited reverends spoke, but a shameful low was reached with the speech by former governor of Ohio, John Gilligan. He had the nerve to denounce people for rioting and told the rally to "let the system do its job." LRPers in the crowd joined others who chanted against Gilligan, "No Justice, No Peace!" We were a minority in the crowd, but we were loud and angry enough that we rattled him – so much so that co-chair LaBotz had to seize the microphone to demand quiet and lecture us on how important it was to keep "the coalition" together.

Having broken from the march organizers' coalition, the activists grouped around Anti-Racist Action proved nevertheless incapable of offering a strategy for the struggle to go forward. Their "anti-authoritarian bloc" in the march was by far the single biggest contingent, but their only distinguishing tactic was to stop moving at several points in the march, wait for a large gap to grow between them and the marchers ahead, and then run to catch up – showy but politically meaningless.

Many then went to a separate civil disobedience action in a white business area. This drew attention to the hypocrisy of the rulers' curfew, which targeted Black neighborhoods but allowed well-to-do whites to party late into the night. But it didn't take the mass struggle forward an inch and got a number of activists arrested in the process. Militant actions of small groups are no substitute for mass actions. The most politically advanced and serious members of ARA hopefully will respond to the obvious failures of this approach and search for a political strategy that can answer the problems of the struggle.

In spite of the organizers' efforts, at the march chants like "No Justice, No Peace, No Racist Police!" were still popular. And many were looking for a strategy to take the struggle forward. Comrades of the League for the Revolutionary Party participated in the march and distributed widely a bulletin, whose headline made clear where we stood: *Long Live the Rebellion Against Police Terror! Let's Make the Next Rebellion More Organized and Focused So It Hits the Rulers Harder!* We got into many great conversations with revolutionary-minded youth, including several who had been in the uprising. Many of them committed to discussing the issues with us further.

LEADERSHIP FOR "THE FIRE NEXT TIME"

At the time of the uprising, Mayor Luken observed that "There are flash points like ours in every city in America. If there is a mayor in any major city not worried about the coming summer, then he or she is not thinking." Even capitalist politicians recognized that the same anger exists among working-class and poor people of color across the country.

Bourgeois leaders and upper-class people, Black as well as white, see the masses of people of color as unthinking brutes capable only of tremendous explosions of rage. But in fact the Cincinnati rebellion was the product of serious thought and discussion, in homes, schools, bars and the streets. That is how lessons have been drawn and generalized in many mass working-class struggles.

When Timothy Thomas's murder showed that the attacks could no longer go unanswered, the rebellion unleashed not just a torrent of anger, but – briefly – an explosion of politically conscious actions. When their self-appointed leaders proved useless in defense against racist attacks, Black youth and other working-class people took the initiative – setting themselves against the ruling class's seats of political and armed power, formulating political slogans, starting marches, organizing meetings, speaking out. There was clearly a



June 2 "March for Justice." Organizers insisted on "peaceful" protest, respect for leaders.

significant advance in political consciousness, not just reactive radical responses. For a few days, the masses' creativity bloomed.

However, such explosive leaps have severe limitations, as Cincinnati also proved. Had the beginnings of a revolutionary leadership existed before the rebellion and grown further out of it, the rebellion could have been organized and spread into an even more powerful assault on ruling-class power. It could have forced real concessions from the ruling class. And its success could have sparked other rebellions across the country. Its enemies concentrated on the worst aspects of the riot, to hide the inspiring political rebellion that took place. It is the task of revolutionaries to guard the rebellion's true history from the ruling class's lies, so that all workers may learn its lessons. *That will be the fire next time.*

RACE, CLASS AND REBELLION

Black people are targeted by capitalism for the most murderous police brutality, the cruelest poverty, and the most relentless exploitation. The Black residents of Over-the-Rhine have been ruthlessly exploited and subjugated by an occupation army of cops. Unless racism is stopped in its tracks, it will only get worse, far worse.

People of color cannot afford to wait for white workers to support them before they defend themselves against racist attacks. That idea would be both absurd and racially elitist. Black workers and poor must fight back now. With organized struggle and fighting leaders, limited but real victories are possible. But to finally crush racism, capitalism itself must be overthrown. Socialist revolution, and the destruction of the system of exploitation and oppression, takes the conscious struggle of the overwhelming majority of the working class and the poor of all races and nationalities.

Socialist revolution does not mean waiting for a utopian spirit of brotherly love to magically transform backward sectors of the working class. It doesn't mean making any concession to white racists nor to the passivity of the majority of white workers. It means conducting an all-out fight against racism — and the super-exploitation it enforces — right now. That is the only way to real unity.

In America today, however, the working class is divided by racism, particularly in cities as intensely segregated as Cincinnati. Many white workers are frightened of losing their jobs and income; the system tells them that lower-paid Black, Latino and immigrant workers are the threat. They do not yet see that when workers of color are forced to work for less or to be jobless, their own jobs and wages are undermined by the rules of capitalist competition. Nevertheless, most white workers don't favor racist brutality and believe in a fair deal for everyone. But they are also largely ignorant of the reality of racist super-exploitation and oppression, and they don't see the cops as the enforcers. In Cincinnati, while some whites joined the protests, the lack of outrage among white workers at the murder of Timothy Thomas was obvious.

LESSONS OF HISTORY

Black liberation cannot wait for any liberal labor leader to ride a white horse to the rescue. History shows that "Negro-Labor Alliances" like those of the 1960's ended up undermining the struggle of Black people and serving the interests of the bureaucrats who led them. To "unite" behind the present leadership of either the unions or the Black establishment is a guaranteed formula for defeat.

But the past also shows another path to united action. In the early 1970's, the urban Black rebellions were followed by a wave of industrial strikes, both wildcat and union-recognized. Victories were won. For the first time in American history, white workers followed the leadership of Black workers who took on both the bosses and the bureaucrats who tried to restrain them. Genuine solidarity occurred because white workers realized that these struggles were in their interests as well, interests opposed by their official leaders.

At that time the capitalist system was still relatively prosperous and could afford to make serious concessions. Today, workers can still defend and win some gains, but a more powerful struggle is needed even to achieve that. The ruling class is already on the attack, with cuts to education and health care, the slashing of welfare, the replacement of full-time jobs with part-time, low-paying jobs and mounting layoffs. And as the economic crisis inevitably deepens, to support its profits the bosses will have to intensify exploitation for all workers to the levels faced by people of color today.

Already significant numbers of white workers and poor people suffer harassment and brutality at the hands of cops, though not nearly on the scale and intensity that people of color do. Even now, when white workers organize to struggle in protests and strikes, the cops make clear that they are the armed enemies of all workers. The murder of anti-imperialist protester Carlo Giuliani by police in Genoa, Italy, is only a taste of what is in store for white militants here.

As they turn to struggle, increasing numbers of white workers will realize that they too need a new leadership and strategy to defend themselves. While the capitalists do their best to use racism to set white workers against people of color, the system itself will also generate a far stronger pressure toward interracial working-class unity in response.

For the Black working class to play the leading role that its history of struggle has carved out for it, it must forge a new leadership to replace the capitalist politicians and preachers of today. As the Cincinnati events prove, it is not enough to discard the betrayers in the heat of the rebellion — they must be replaced with a new fighting working-class leadership, armed with a clear vision of the path ahead and how to achieve it. Such a vanguard party leadership cannot be created at the last moment; it must be constructed in advance, in the struggles of today. It must come from the masses and gain their confidence by showing its ability to win victories now.

ORGANIZED MASS COMMUNITY STRUGGLES

In their neighborhoods, working-class people are spread out and isolated in their homes; they have no inherent cooperative pattern and have no automatic way of getting together. There are class differences within neighborhoods; especially in poor areas, distrust can run high as people scramble to make a living. Cops, the mercenary pawns of the ruling class, are readily visible; but our real enemies, the capitalists, are not overtly present, and most residents don't see them as the source of their problems. It is not like understanding the role of the bosses at the workplace.

In residential neighborhoods, a sense of powerlessness is the norm, especially in poor Black working-class areas. Political and economic power over the community is exercised by outside forces. Established leaders reflect the power of the state over the community rather than the needs of the neighborhood itself.

The masses' rejection of the establishment leaders made this condition glaring in Cincinnati. Most of the city's Black leaders are churchmen. As in many cities, the only existing permanent community organizations are the churches. At certain points in history some churches have led struggles, but even then they have encouraged passive followers rather than creative fighters. Ministers are "shepherds" who refer to their followers as their "flock": they are supposed to remain submissive, like sheep. And today churches are rarely even momentary flashpoints for battle. They beg for government funding for pacification programs and serve the interests of the capitalists who do not even appear in working-class communities and certainly not poor Black ones.

For launching community-based struggles, at first glance it seems that there are no ready means of mass self-organization to serve as a base for the struggle. That is why so many of the protest eruptions in Cincinnati started spontaneously and randomly. But there is one possibility. As our bulletin explained:

Imagine if the Black community already had organizations it could turn to, in which decisions could be made on how to protest, where and when. Such organizations must be built, and those who took the lead in the rebellion will have to take the lead in this effort. The youth, who were the backbone of the Cincinnati rebellion, do have pre-existing bases upon which they can build. Working-class high schools and colleges, for example, can be used as an important base for organizing. Revolutionaries and other militants can launch and lead school-wide assemblies which could meet daily during upheavals and conduct discussions of what actions should be taken.

Such assemblies could be started by producing a leaflet calling on all students interested in discussing and joining the struggle to meet in a specific place and time. As the struggle grows in power, classes could be suspended for mass meetings, as has often happened in the past. Schools can be taken over. Self-defense units can be formed based on the schools. Schools become collective organizers and a focus for gathering, preparation and decision-making. Coordination and leadership bodies can be elected.

With the youth playing a clear role in Cincinnati and other uprisings, organizing based on high schools can act as a spark for the rest of the struggle. But student action, even when the students are working-class themselves, is no substitute for industrial mobilization. And student leadership cannot substitute for leadership by a party rooted in the working class itself.

The Black ghetto riots, in the 60's and now, have generally been race conscious but not class conscious. They have most often been ignited by glaring acts of police brutality. The Black workers naturally and correctly see the attacks as assaults upon themselves as Blacks. The fact that the Cincinnati uprising immediately raised demands for economic improvements showed a recognition of a link between enforced poverty and police brutality. Nevertheless, the masses do not yet see the police actions as a defense of capitalist exploitation; nor do they see that Black people are under attack because they are part of the working class. Therefore they haven't yet pushed the issue in the workplaces nor in the unions.

Revolutionaries have explained the link between race and class but have had only a small impact so far. That does not mean that we abandon the fight within the unions and shops for conscious working-class mobilization in the struggle against police brutality. From our experience in the unions, the LRP knows that fighting against the stream today will aid us enormously when the current changes tomorrow. Nevertheless, in assessing the concrete balance of forces in Cincinnati, we know that the initial upheavals over cop brutality will almost certainly be community-based rather than industrial.

That is why we point to the schools as immediate, interim launching pads for organizing the struggle. At the same time, we stress the importance of fighting in industry and the unions for the big battalions of the working class to participate in the struggle and win the leadership.

ORGANIZING MASS STRUGGLE

Within school-based organized upsurges, revolutionaries would fight for a program which could reach and mobilize the working class as a whole. The struggle could spread from the schools and neighborhoods into shutting down workplaces and entire cities.

Workers have great advantages in mobilizing struggles like strikes — and even uprisings — that take the workplace as their organizing point. The work process is designed to promote concentrated, organized, disciplined and cooperative activity. The issues are relatively clear. The enemies — workers versus bosses — are well-defined; class consciousness develops in industrial confrontations. At worksites, all the workers can be together and their action can be planned. Daily life in industry enables leaders to emerge, become known and vie with one another for support. Workplaces are places of power; shutting down production means cutting off profits, the lifeblood of the capitalist system.

That is why workplace-based struggles are more effective than those restricted to communities and even schools. Our bulletin cited the example of the League of Revolutionary Black Workers, which was built by young Black workers who came out of the ghetto rebellions of the late 1960's. Working in auto and other factories, they learned the tremendous advantages that workplace organization provides. As they explained:

In one factory we have 10,000 people who are faced with the same conditions. ... When you go out into the community, the interests of the people ... are going to be more dispersed. ... The kinds of actions which can be taken [by communities] are not as effectively damaging to the ruling class as the kinds of actions which can be taken in the plant. ... When you close down Hamtramck assembly plant ... for a day you can cost Chrysler corporation 1,000 cars. (Quoted in James Geschwender, *Class, Race and Worker Insurgency*, p. 138.)

If Black militants in the schools and communities were to couple to the fight for racial equality demands for jobs, decent housing, quality free education, universal health care and a human income for all workers, they could build a far more powerful and sustained struggle. Such an approach would spread the struggle into the workplaces and the unions. The increasingly conscious working class could take the helm of the rebellion.

Far-reaching programmatic demands like those for full employment are vital for the defense of Black workers and youth. The ruling class recognizes that the Black rebellion has economic roots — that's why it sets up its blue-ribbon outfits falsely promising to create jobs and make other improvements. Black workers are still the last to be hired and the first to be fired. History proves that only guaranteed full employment at decent and equal wages can begin to answer the inherent racism embedded in capitalist America.

Such a program could have an enormous impact upon other workers of color and white workers, laying the basis for a united struggle rooted in common class interest. That is how white



Protesters surround Cincinnati police headquarters after murder of Timothy Thomas.

workers will learn that forcing low wages on Black workers is an attack on their jobs and wages too. That is how true interracialist solidarity can begin to be forged.

This approach demands that a genuinely revolutionary working-class leadership be built now. If such a leadership had been present during the April uprising, those protesters who were in the unions could have been mobilized to challenge the silence of the pro-capitalist bureaucrats. They could have insisted that racist police brutality is the unions' business and demanded that the unions speak out and take action against it.

The LRP has long advocated that one-day city-wide general strikes be called by the unions, schools and community organizations, immediately in response to any police atrocity. Non-union workers and unemployed could be drawn into such a fight to "Shut the City Down." Such actions, in contrast to the passive civil disobedience and consumer boycotts perennially favored by liberal leaders and perennially ignored by the ruling class, rely on the power of workers to shut off capitalist profits. The cops can't be reformed, but they can be frightened into retreating from brutality, if their ruling class masters fear the consequences. "*No justice, no peace, no profits!*"

In cities like New York and Chicago, where unions organize large numbers of Black and Latino workers, our call has made immediate sense to many. In Cincinnati, where unions are weak and Black workers not yet mobilized as such, strike actions appear to be further off. But the tactics we are advocating could change that. Beginning with union members challenging their leaders to fight racism and the bosses' attacks, this approach continues by organizing to replace the leaders who undermine the struggle. We point to the need for labor to lead, but it would be suicidal for the Black struggle not to openly attack the labor bureaucrats, expose their role and replace them.

MASS SELF-DEFENSE

As communist revolutionaries, we do not believe that racism and brutality can be reformed out of the cops. The cops do not exist to protect the masses of people from crime — that is just a formal job description that covers up their real purpose, to defend the capitalist class from the masses' struggles. Police brutality will only be ended for good when the working class rises up in revolution, overthrows the capitalists and smashes their armed state power in the course of establishing its own armed power. A workers' state would base its power on armed workers' militias, not on a mercenary band hired by exploiters. Workers' armed power would protect our class and, in contrast to the capitalist cops, would actually prevent crimes against the people and fight racists.

But we can also force the cops to back off from their terror

campaign temporarily, while our struggles build toward an assault on the entire system. According to Cincinnati FOP head Fangman, the cops are now afraid to do much "pro-active policing." "They're afraid of being fired or indicted. They're afraid of incurring financial devastation because of legal bills." Obviously he's lying: the cops have no reason to fear the courts. But there is a grain of truth in his statement: the cops were terrified by the rebellion. And mass struggles that strike at the profits of the ruling class the cops serve can, even more, force their bosses to restrain them, for the moment.

Cincinnati's state of emergency crackdown shows that when pacification occurs in the wake of an uprising, random acts of racist and anti-working class brutality by the police are replaced by systematic and comprehensive repression. Oppressed people should reject the reverends' and politicians' pleas for peaceful protest. Peace on the part of the oppressed means war by the oppressors. Rather they should follow the guidance of Malcolm X, and assert their right to self-defense — *by any means necessary!* Malcolm in his day was so enraged that pacifist preachings by so-called civil rights leaders allowed unarmed Black people to be brutalized that he called such leaders "almost agents of the Ku Klux Klan." (*Malcolm X Speaks*, p. 209.) In the course of building mass organizations of struggle, the working class will have to learn to arm and defend itself from attack.

The history of Black people's struggles, like those of the oppressed everywhere, is rich with examples of organizing for self-defense. The clearest examples are from the movements of the 1950's and '60's. In spite of opposition from other leaders of his organization, NAACP leader Robert F. Williams in Monroe, North Carolina organized armed self-defense groups to protect the civil rights movement from the Klan and police — including shooting up a motorcade of Klansmen and cops that was on its way to attack a Black leader. His actions led to a network of self-defense groups in many cities in the South, the Deacons for Defense. This example was taken forward in the North by Malcolm X, and later by the original Black Panther Party.

Our pamphlet, *Armed Self-Defense and the Revolutionary*

Program, provides a history of these efforts, and discusses their strengths and weaknesses. Key to successful armed self-defense is that it is a part of a widespread struggle and based on the masses themselves, as opposed to elite "protectors." Typically, self-defense units based on inherently atomized communities are short-lived. Lasting armed self-defense can only succeed when it is based on working-class self-discipline and organization.

THE REBELLION AND THE MEANING OF MARXISM

Cincinnati's rebellion shows the potential of mass struggles as well as the desperate need for communist revolutionary leadership. The protesters' rejection of the current misleadership, and the attempts to move forward in spite of it, raised a key question: where will an alternative leadership come from? The politics expressed in the targets the protesters selected and the slogans they displayed demonstrated the creative potential of the masses and their urge to provide direction. But that potential would have stood a far better chance of being fulfilled if a nucleus of an alternative revolutionary leadership had already been developed beforehand.

Karl Marx pointed out that workers fit themselves for power when they stand up for themselves and engage in struggle. When the revolutionary party is yet too weak to have won the confidence and leadership of the rest of the working class, the masses in struggle begin to carve out their own paths. Marxists are confident that socialist revolution is the inherent and objective need of workers, a goal they discover in the course of confronting their class enemies. Socialism isn't a private scheme of condescending saviors who bestow it upon workers. As Marx and Engels explained in the *Communist Manifesto*:

The Communists ... have no interests separate and apart from those of the proletariat as a whole.

They do not set up any sectarian principles of their own, by which to shape and mold the proletarian movement. ... The theoretical conclusions of the Communists are in no way based on ideas or principles that have been invented, or discovered, by this or that would-be universal reformer.

They merely express, in general terms, actual relations springing from an existing class struggle, from a historical movement going on under our very eyes.

This relationship between workers' ongoing struggles and the ideas promoted by revolutionaries was the basis for Marx and Engels' emphasis on the role of revolutionaries in leading their class. Revolutionary communists, are, they explained:

... on the one hand practically, the most advanced and resolute section of the working class, ... that section which pushes forward all others; on the other hand, theoretically, they have over the great mass of the proletariat the advantage of clearly understanding the lines of march, the conditions, and the ultimate general results of the proletarian movement.

Communists explain to our fellow workers the direction and lessons of the struggle and seek to prove our ideas on the basis of experience. In this way we expect to win the most politically advanced, class-conscious workers to the task of building the revolutionary party leadership our class needs. The revolutionary party will be built out of mass struggles and workers' own growing political consciousness. The advanced revolutionary workers will gain the masses' confidence as rebellions become revolutions.

To this end, layer by layer and over time, workers and youth who have been taught from birth to accept their place on the bottom of society will change their whole idea of who they are and what they are capable of. Many will learn to see themselves not as born followers but as political leaders. The empowering experience of struggle, and the example and encouragement of other revolutionary workers, will help this revolution in consciousness take place.

This experience must also overcome the elitist view of workers held by many self-proclaimed revolutionaries. The great Russian revolutionary leader V.I. Lenin never embraced the cynical views of those who today finesse quotes from him to denigrate the role of

Essential Reading for the Struggle

Fight Police Terror!

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This pamphlet studies recent struggles against police brutality in a number of cities, and reviews various attempts to reform the police. It explains why the cops can't be reformed, but how a struggle against police brutality can win gains and be linked to the struggle to overthrow the capitalist system.

Armed Self-Defense and the Revolutionary Program 75¢

This pamphlet reviews how workers in general, and Black people in particular, have organized for self-defense in the past, and puts forward a strategy for organizing armed self-defense as part of a mass struggle against capitalism.

Marxism, Interracialism and the Black Struggle

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workers in leading their struggles. But he did once argue that revolutionary political consciousness could not be developed by workers themselves but would have to be brought to the working class from outside, by intellectuals. The experience of the 1905 revolution in which the vanguard workers left the vast majority of intellectuals in the dust, taught Lenin that he was wrong. (See *PR* 23.)

The development of revolutionary consciousness is not a spontaneous occurrence — an unconscious, silent response to its environment the way grass grows in response to light and water. No, it is a product of much thinking and debate. Over family dinners, workplace lunches and everywhere else, workers voice their opinions, argue issues and develop their ideas. Explosions of struggle like Cincinnati show how the class's consciousness and struggles develop in the direction of a revolutionary class war against capitalism. It is the task of revolutionaries to consolidate the gains in consciousness made in struggle so that they are not lost but sharpened. They must see to it that the most advanced representatives of that consciousness are organized to lead struggles in the future.



Protesters take over City Council after Timothy Thomas's murder. Sign at center reads: "Stop Killing Us Or Else ..." Masses soon made good on threat.

NEW LESSONS OF THE REBELLION

The ideas of revolutionary Marxism are the concentration of the lessons of the entire history of the class struggle. As such, Marxists continue to learn and grow from the experience of every serious struggle. The pre-existing vanguard elements study the direction that the developing struggle is carving out and adjust, not their revolutionary strategy, but their tactics and agitation accordingly.

The far left's treatment of the upsurge stems from the fact that, in one way or another, most of it is really composed of middle-class intellectuals who arrogantly expect to play the role of teachers to the working class, which they expect one day to assemble before them to learn their prescriptions and lessons.

The LRP's founders formulated our basic ideas in response to the mass struggles of the late 1960's and early 1970's: America's ghetto uprisings, the mass strikes which swept Western Europe and the anti-imperialist upheavals in the neo-colonial world. Those struggles dispelled the myth prevalent at the time, that the working class was nothing but a battering ram that "enlightened" intellectuals could wield against capitalism. Those struggles showed that the working class was the only revolutionary class in society and that it was trying to produce a revolutionary political leadership from its own ranks.

With the Los Angeles rebellion of 1992, we were presented with an old challenge taking a new form because of changes in the capitalist economy, "race relations," declining industrial job opportunities and the reduced level of industrially-centered working-class struggle. How could the massive community explosions of people of color both achieve immediate successes and lead to a conscious and united workers' struggle against capitalism?

We tactically urged advanced militants in Los Angeles and in future similar upheavals to raise demands that would be in the interests of all workers. We stressed the importance of spreading the idea of mass armed self-defense and the need to address the industrial workforce about the need to launch a general strike. Thus, in addition to our basic strategic demands that we raised within industry for implementation by advanced workers, we now saw that anti-police brutality community-based riots could ignite industrially-based working-class actions if revolutionaries were able to lead. (see "Los Angeles — Racism and Revolution," in *PR* 44, and *Armed Self-Defense and the Revolutionary Program*.)

Cincinnati's rebellion confirmed and advanced our understanding of these past lessons. It has made us even more conscious of the importance of youth in the struggle. Even though by 1992 we had arrived at a community-to-industry tactical approach, the youth's role

in Cincinnati taught the importance of schools as an organizing center for community uprisings. We had long experience in raising economic and political demands during struggles in working-class colleges like the City University of New York; in the 1995 CUNY movement we campaigned for a student strike that would aim to trigger a municipal general strike. Cincinnati taught us to apply the tactic to high schools during urban community rebellions.

Above all, Cincinnati's rebellion confirms the most urgent teaching of Marxism. As the outstanding revolutionary Leon Trotsky summed up in *The Transitional Program*:

The chief obstacle in the path of transforming the pre-revolutionary into a revolutionary state is the opportunist character of proletarian leadership. ... The masses again and again enter the road of revolution. But each time they are blocked by their own conservative bureaucratic machines. ...

The turn is now to the proletariat, i.e., chiefly to its revolutionary vanguard. The historical crisis of mankind is reduced to the crisis of the revolutionary leadership.

Today we are by no means in a pre-revolutionary situation, as the world was when Trotsky wrote in the late 1930's. But the observation that every time the workers and poor attempt to launch struggles against capitalism's attacks, they are confronted with pro-capitalist leaders who hold back and betray their struggles, is more true than ever. The task, as Trotsky explained, is for the vanguard, the most politically conscious and courageous workers and poor, to organize themselves into the beginnings of a revolutionary leadership that can lead the masses' struggles to victory. If any of our readers, under the influence of the opportunist socialist groups, doubted Lenin and Trotsky's strategy of forging a revolutionary leadership through fierce combat against the working class's misleaders, we hope the Black working-class youth's courageous denunciation of their sellout leaders in Cincinnati helps convince them of the genuinely revolutionary approach.

Cincinnati's rebellion also confirms the disproportionate role of Black workers in the revolutionary vanguard, because of their experience gained through a history of struggle against oppression and super-exploitation. The LRP is now moving forward with a richer armory of tactics, and with an even fuller confidence in the role of the most oppressed layers of the proletariat in the future American socialist revolution.

We call on all revolutionary-minded workers and youth to join us in preparing for the fire next time — so that it will blaze an even more brilliant trail across the country and serve as a beacon for the workers and oppressed of the world in their struggle against capitalism and its murderous racism. ●

New York Transit

continued from page 32

capitalist Democratic Party. A former supporter of the now-defunct Marxist-Leninist Party, Toussaint once opposed the pro-capitalist political maneuvers of the union bureaucrats. Now in charge of the union, he features Democratic politicians on every possible platform — above all the four Democratic primary candidates for mayor. In exchange, he hopes that the winner will give him some crumbs.

To this end, Toussaint ignores the fact that all four bourgeois politicians defend New York State's Taylor Law, which forbids transit and all other public workers from striking. They all also support workfare policies initiated by Giuliani, which eliminated union jobs and hired welfare recipients at below-minimum wages. Toussaint is now talking about turning Local 100 into a Democratic Party bastion, following the model of Dennis Rivera in the hospital workers' union, Local 1199.

At the same time, Toussaint is beginning to construct a new bureaucratic machine designed to undermine rebelliousness. The new leadership has already appointed some elected Executive Board members to salaried staff positions, hoping to ensure their loyalty. When the previous bureaucratic regimes appointed Board members to such positions, the appointees at least had to resign from the Board. Not so with the new brass.

Toussaint is also building a network of stewards and training them as a buffer in the local between his regime and the members. Although he needs the support of elements of the previous corrupt machine, it would be suicide for him to rely upon them. He needs a body which is trusted by the militant section of the membership

but which can be fashioned into an instrument loyal to his regime. Ostensibly the new stewards are supposed to defend workers, but Toussaint also aims to use them to discipline the ranks and police their protest actions. He has hired Eddie Kaye, a veteran union hack who was a major force in maintaining the 1199 bureaucracy. Nevertheless, not only union careerists but many good militants who want to fight the bosses have joined the program. It is still up for grabs whether Toussaint and Kaye can turn them into the bureaucratic weapon they want.

Toussaint came to power on the crest of a massive struggle and high expectations, which he must still cater to. His emerging bureaucracy is on a collision course with its base of supporters in the Local 100 membership. These workers still expect a fighting response to the MTA's continued assault. Given their experience, transit workers see no alternative to supporting the Democrats, but in reality they expect they'll get only minor help.

UNION RESPONSE TO ATTACKS

Using provisions in the contract negotiated by the James leadership, the MTA has substantially reduced its funding of the local's Health Benefit Trust (HBT). This move threatens to bankrupt the HBT in the near future and cut off benefits to transit workers. The MTA's strategy is to hold the health of the union members and their families hostage until the union agrees to productivity givebacks and speed-up. Further, it is stepping up "plantation justice," the use of discipline and drug-screening to intimidate members.

After months of wavering, Toussaint called a protest rally on March 28 at which 8000 angry workers turned up. Despite the "friends of labor" on stage, the rally showed the will of workers to fight to defend their health benefits. Placards prepared by the LRP reading "No Health Fund, No Work! Prepare to Strike" were snatched up by the hundreds. Our *Revolutionary Transit Worker (RTW)* bulletins with the same headline were enthusiastically taken by thousands of workers. *RTW* emphasized the need for an immediate general membership meeting to launch the struggle.

But Toussaint & Co. offered only rhetoric and hot-air speeches from the Democratic pols. Any half-decent union leadership would have used the rally to threaten the MTA with more powerful actions if it didn't back down. Toussaint made clear that he did not favor preparing to strike. Soon after the rally, he talked about compromise, hinting that givebacks could be traded.

According to the civil-service newspaper, the *Chief* (April 6), Toussaint said "I think there are lots of other ways for us to [get HBT funding] within the Taylor Law, whether it's legal action, member mobilization or educating the community and the riders." This was a feeler aimed at the bosses, indicating that he was ready to make deals at the expense of the ranks in order to avoid a struggle. Shortly after the March rally, according to the *Chief*, Toussaint "suggested that favorable agreements could be made on ... a large-scale apprentice program or a plan to introduce additional technological advances." These are on the MTA's current wish-list of takebacks: to get journeyman's labor from lower-paid apprentices and eliminate jobs.

Toussaint, of course, didn't propose any such concessions at the mass rally. It is interesting that under the new "rank-and-file" leadership, workers still have to rely on outside sources to learn what their own union's strategy really is.

At the Joint Executive Board meeting of May 19, Toussaint admitted that he had failed to follow up on the March 28 rally. He grimaced when it was pointed out that *RTW* had already made that point. Unfortunately, there is no evidence that Toussaint has learned from his failure.

Emboldened by Toussaint's willingness to compromise without a fight, management has refused to restore secure funding for the HBT and continues to insist on productivity givebacks, job speed-ups and co-pays. To make their contempt for the TWU clear,

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the MTA is going ahead with its plan to eliminate 237 station agent jobs and close token booths. Supporters and allies of the LRP put forward motions for a general membership meeting to forge a fighting strategy, but since the last mass membership meeting in December 1999 had defied the leadership and voted to strike, Toussaint had good reason to be wary of another.

WAITING FOR DEMOCRATS

With no visible progress, Toussaint finally had to call for a second demonstration on June 20. About 2000 workers attended, far fewer and less spirited than in March. Again there was only more hoopla and Democrat hot air.

At the rally, LRP supporters' heckling of the Democrats produced discomfort on the podium. Other workers joined us when we began chants of "Taylor Law! Taylor Law!" Then Toussaint's lieutenant Ed Watt, the local's Secretary-Treasurer, jumped to the microphone to counter with "Roger! Roger! Roger!" to drown us out and get workers to switch chants. The conflicting chants show that workers clearly wanted to oppose the Taylor Law but were not yet prepared to embarrass their new leadership. Yet many asked for the latest issue of *Revolutionary Transit Worker* by name.

While transit workers still wanted to fight, most militants retained their belief that Toussaint would lead a struggle. But not hearing any plan from him to mobilize for future action, they do not yet see how to proceed. Extensive discussions on the job and at the rally indicate that this mood is widespread in the local.

Unfortunately, some of the new stewards who acted as marshals seemed to blame the membership for the poor turnout at the rally. That was a further step in the process of bureaucratizing the stewards' network.

His record so far suggests that Toussaint's strategy is to string out the union's response to the HBT bloodletting, hoping that the fund will survive until the election produces a Democratic mayor. Then, as payback for his support, he expects that City Hall will force the MTA to reinventorize the health benefits.

As we write, Toussaint and his buddies have suspended union activity for the summer and have scheduled a membership meeting for September 29. That date is conveniently right after the Democratic Party primary; it allows Toussaint to turn what should be a membership discussion and decision-making meeting into a campaign rally for the mayoral candidate. Militants must fight any such move. The strategy of avoiding confrontation with the transit bosses and hoping that the Democrats will do the union's job for it is doomed to fail.

DISPUTE WITHIN NEW DIRECTIONS

Toussaint's turn away from his past fighting pose has opened him up to criticism from his factional opponents in New Directions itself. There are two main currents in ND, which has been falling into a state of decomposition since its electoral victory. One is Toussaint's developing machine, still based largely in the Track Division; the other is led by Executive Board members Tim Schermerhorn and Steve Downs and a few others close to the "socialist" Solidarity organization.

In the past, Toussaint had posed as a militant critic of the former Downs/Schermerhorn ND leadership. On this basis he was able to take the helm of ND and replace Schermerhorn as ND's presidential candidate. But beginning with the election, these roles seem to have reversed. As Toussaint transforms himself into an out-and-out bureaucrat, ND opponents have hesitantly begun to criticize him for not being militant enough and not relying on the rank and file.

In the February issue of *Labor Notes*, the national magazine for trade union reformers, Downs accused the Toussaint leadership of "toning down" ND's "militant message." Of course, they didn't accuse Roger by name in order to avoid an open conflict, but their target was clear:



"If the suit fits:" new TWU Local 100 president, Roger Toussaint, made a quick change from "rank-and-file" militant to pro-capitalist bureaucrat.

Ironically, the near certainty of victory in 2000 led many in New Directions to urge that the militant message be toned down just to be safe. ... Most of the literature for the local-wide campaign had a bland, generic "good-unionism" feel to it. ... It seemed to say that the key to change was electing the right leaders rather than an active membership.

Downs's criticism of Toussaint was the height of hypocrisy. Under the leadership of Schermerhorn and Downs, ND long ago turned its back on a perspective of mass struggle, preferring to focus on getting elected. Its paper, *Hell on Wheels*, had become less militant-sounding over time. Many elections ago, ND minimized any mention in their campaign material of the need to prepare to strike. Even when there was massive pro-strike sentiment during the 1999 contract negotiations, ND carefully avoided arguing for a strike.

The dispute in New Directions today is really an argument over the spoils of victory. Apparently Downs and other long-time leaders are worried that Toussaint is creating a new bureaucratic machine loyal to himself, not to ND. They have good reason. Now that Toussaint and his associates have replaced the James machine, they have less and less use for ND and even its watered-down rank-and-file reputation. Toussaint's friends — including union staffers — stacked an ND meeting and passed a quorum motion which will make it hard for the group even to meet again unless he goes along. Nevertheless, the dissidents have attempted to avoid an open fight.

Toussaint's buddies have also tried to restrict Eric Josephson, an elected Vice-Chair of the Track Division and well known as a supporter of the LRP, from distributing *RTW*. Then in May, Toussaint's adherents in the Track Division leadership removed Josephson from released-time work (for the union, but paid for by the MTA) on the ludicrous grounds that he allegedly backed down from a confrontation with a boss. Even his loudest opponents, and certainly the bosses, know that he has been unrelenting in fighting management at every turn. That is why supervisors have tried to discipline him so often!

Undoubtedly the LRP is a real irritant to the emerging apparatus. But Josephson was removed to test the waters for an attack on the ND dissidents. The new regime expected that the

Schermerhorn-Downs types, who have difficulty defending themselves, would not fight for Josephson, an open revolutionary.

DISPUTE GOES PUBLIC

The showdown came in June, when Toussaint & Co. ran for delegates to the TWU International Convention — not under the New Directions banner but as the “Unity” slate. In the Car Equipment Department, Naomi Allen, Vice-Chair for Car Inspectors and long-time ND leader, was running on a “Hell on Wheels” slate. Toussaint’s friends forced her off the ballot, condemned her slate and then removed her from her elected released-time position. The charges that she forged the signatures of her own running mates were blatant nonsense. Allen at first went along, dissolving her own slate and thereby depriving the members of her division of a contested vote. That didn’t stop Toussaint’s crew from bringing formal charges against her.

The ND opposition grumbled when Toussaint threw down this gauntlet and tried its best to avert an open collision. But when the *Chief* (July 6) persistently questioned Toussaint, he had to acknowledge his agreement with his allies’ moves. He also denounced Downs for “betraying” the New Directions caucus. Thus Toussaint has gone public with the split. Allen lashed back, and the other dissidents have had to openly argue against the machine’s charges while deploring that the squabble has been taken “outside New Directions meetings.” The *Chief* summed up that “New Directions members who also cherish the group’s independence from the union’s officers admit they have been outmaneuvered by Mr. Toussaint.”

Despite the growing differences between Toussaint’s crew and the old ND leadership, they still agree on important issues. They remain in favor of using the courts to settle union disputes and otherwise inviting the capitalists’ state to intervene in the workers’ organizations. And although there are genuine fighters attracted to the more militant-sounding wing, the dissident leaders do not represent workers’ basic interests any more than do Toussaint & Co.

Just as Toussaint doesn’t present his compromising strategy in the union’s press where the workers could form their own judgment, his ND opponents have so far tried to avoid bringing their differences before the membership. So much for “union democracy” and “rank-and-filism”! We demand that they stand up against the new bureaucratism and defend Allen, Josephson and themselves inside the union. Josephson has already launched his defense and supported Allen’s, starting with a letter published in the *Chief* (July 20).

Revolutionaries will challenge the dissident leaders to openly defend the interests of transit workers as a whole. Since they claim to be militant over issues like speed-up, jobs, health care and the Taylor Law, let them mobilize their followers. We warn that if such a mobilization doesn’t happen, workers can again become demoralized.

In challenging the ND dissidents, we have absolutely no illusions that they will act like the militants that they claim to be, let alone real socialists. Our putting them on the spot is necessary because a number of militant workers who are in the process of seeing through Toussaint still believe in the old ND leaders. In struggle, we believe they will see that we are right about both old and new New Directions.

We also face the fact that most militants, including those who lean toward the old ND leadership, have not given up hope that Toussaint will deliver significant benefits. We know that the growth in the number of workers subscribing to *RTW* and asking for bundles to distribute is only partly due to interest in the revolutionary alternative, or even in flat-out militant opposition to Toussaint. At this time it more reflects a desire for truthful information and a discussion of how to fight the MTA, neither of which is available from any other source in the local. Nevertheless, we have taken a solid first step in helping raise consciousness. We hope to convince our widening audience that a fighting communist working-class leadership is the only answer for the TWU and for society as a whole. That leadership can only be built by workers themselves; nobody else can do it for us.

HOW TO FIGHT BUREAUCRATISM

The situation in New York transit should be a lesson to all workers about the fraud of the rank-and-filist approach put forward by Solidarity, *Labor Notes* and much of what passes for a socialist left today. The claim that a genuine anti-bureaucratic struggle can take place without an open fight for a revolutionary leadership and program inevitably betrays the workers’ struggles.

Bureaucracy isn’t just the nasty way that rotten people rule in the unions. It is the only way trade union leaders can act when they function as brokers for the sale of labor power to the bosses. The only non-bureaucratic leadership is one that has the support of the members *because* the membership knows they won’t simply act within the capitalist bargaining framework but will employ the real might of our class. That is, only a revolutionary leadership that has won the confidence of its base can fundamentally defeat bureaucratism. In contrast, the “realistic” rank-and-filism of the New Directions types just serves to train new generations of labor bureaucrats. The renewed bureaucratization of TWU Local 100 following the election of Roger Toussaint and ND represents only one more chapter in a long line of similar betrayals.

We will use every principled means at our disposal to expose and defeat the emerging bureaucracy in Local 100 in order to unify the ranks in the face of MTA attacks. Transit workers are strong enough not only to defend their past gains — their strike could ignite a general strike of all municipal workers, which could cripple both City Hall and Wall Street, the imperialist capital of the nation and the world. That is the potential power of TWU Local 100 if it were unchained. ●

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Revolutionary vs. Reformist Methods in the Unions

For almost two decades the LRP has carried out a relentless exposure of New Directions' reformism in the TWU. In leaflets and electoral bulletins, in the pages of *RTW* and *PR*, at countless meetings and demonstrations and on the job, we explained that ND was no real alternative to the sellout bureaucrats who ran the TWU. Our analysis nailed ND's failure to build a strike movement over the course of several contract struggles, which all ended with sellout deals. We attacked New Directions' approach, which replaced preparations for a strike and mass action with the promise that if they were elected, all would be well. We condemned ND's use of the bourgeois courts against the union. We criticized many of the positions ND took on day-to-day issues and always related them to the big political picture.

In counterposing our revolutionary strategy for mass action, we rejected the stagist method of first replacing the old bureaucrats with a reform leadership and postponing mobilizing the ranks against the bosses. The silent socialists within ND asserted that in order to be able later to raise revolutionary socialist demands, at first only seemingly acceptable reform demands are possible. This "rank-and-filist" approach means that socialists present themselves simply as militants and not as revolutionaries, telling the workers only what they believe workers want to hear — and avoiding saying what they claim to believe about capitalism.

In contrast, genuine Marxists tell the truth as they see it. While workers can temporarily defend their interests and even win improvements in their living and working conditions with mass struggle, in the long run the only solution to capitalist attacks is socialist revolution. We have always said that socialist revolution is the only way to put a stop to economic exploitation, racism, national and sexual chauvinism, profit-gouging, deteriorating health care and the like. And the worst is yet to come unless capitalism is overthrown.

Truth and not masquerade is the way workers become aware that revolution is the only way our class can attain a decent life. And only a working class conscious of the truth can actually make that revolution.

Class consciousness means that workers come to see that united in action they have enormous power — they can bring the entire economy to a halt and stop profit-making in its tracks. Our class becomes conscious of its true interests and the need for revolution not simply by reading textbooks but through practical action. Mass action is the only way even to defend past gains and to win new ones. Workers learn through experience, through fighting the capitalists in the living class struggle. And whatever the initial outlook of most of the participants, mass working-class action always carries the threat of a revolutionary challenge to the system.

REVOLUTIONARY WORK IN LOCAL 100

Over the years, we have presented our case in direct opposition to New Directions at each critical point. In the '80's and '90's, our propaganda was distributed broadly but was aimed chiefly at reaching a very narrow layer of far-seeing workers who would be interested in revolutionary socialism. Marxists describe such a layer as the "advanced workers," those who can become part of the initial cadres of the now-developing vanguard party. Sometimes that layer is very big, sometimes it can be quite small, depending on objective conditions and the level of class struggle. In those years, we won respect as steadfast militants and Marxists, but given the low level of struggle, our efforts to oppose the bureaucracy and expose ND had little immediate impact.



Russian revolutionary Marxist, Vladimir Lenin, developed principled tactics to unite revolutionaries with militant workers in immediate struggles, while always pointing to the goal of overthrowing capitalism.

Having seen their struggles constantly betrayed by their leaderships, workers felt themselves weak and impotent, understandably fearful. Not only was the idea of socialist revolution beyond the pale, even the word "strike" had become anathema. Since struggles had subsided, so had our ability to point out revolutionary lessons in practice, not just on paper. We fought against the stream of cynicism but remained only a small factor in the TWU.

In contrast, at the time of the near-strike in 1999, there was an exhilarating mood of renewed militancy in Local 100. But despite our re-invigorated exposure propaganda, it became clear when the Local's election approached that workers were looking to New Directions as the alternative to the James gang's betrayals. We had to re-evaluate our tactics. If we stood opposed to both the James forces and ND, the developing movement of militant workers would have seen us as a barrier to getting rid of James. Yet it would have been treachery not to warn fellow workers that Toussaint & Co. would betray them.

BOLSHEVIK TACTICS

In such situations, Lenin and Trotsky elaborated the tactic of "critical support," which the Bolsheviks used effectively to challenge the reformist Menshevik and Social Revolutionary parties during the Russian Revolution of 1917. For example, in the months leading up to the revolution, the Mensheviks and SR's held a majority in the workers' councils ("soviets"). At the same time the reformists were in a bloc with open capitalists in the Provisional Government. The workers believed that the reformists wanted state power in order to carry out their militant-sounding program. But the Bolsheviks knew better and openly attacked these parties for being unwilling to oust the capitalists from the government and take power themselves, in the name of the working class. The Bolsheviks therefore raised the demand, "Down with the Ten Capitalist Ministers!" to expose the reformist parties, promising to support them in forming a government without the capitalists.

As the Bolsheviks predicted, the Mensheviks and SR's did not take state power into their own hands, because they did not want

to break with the capitalists. Thus they stood exposed in practice. Words alone could not have done the job; the tactical demand did. The Bolsheviks went on to win the majority of workers to their banner.

A few years later, Lenin advised British communists to apply a similar tactic in their parliamentary election. The workers were in motion, trying to fight the bourgeoisie, but they still had illusions in the pro-capitalist Labour Party. He argued for critical support to Labour in the coming election, a party which he openly condemned as "counterrevolutionary." Lenin's well-known formula, to support Labour "as a rope supports a hanged man," meant putting Labour in office where its treachery could more readily be tested and thus exposed.

In 1935 Trotsky gave a particularly clear explanation of the method behind the critical support tactic, when the leftish Independent Labour Party was debating whether to vote for Labour. Trotsky argued that the decision did not depend on whether this or that candidate raised particular policies that revolutionaries might agree with. Instead:

The I.L.P. must say to the workers: "The Labour Party will deceive you and betray you, but you do not believe us. Very well, we will go through the experience with you but in no case do we identify ourselves with the Labour Party program." ... It should, above all, show in practice what true critical support means ... accompanying support with the sharpest and widest criticism, ... patiently explaining that such support is only for the purpose of exposing the treachery of the Labour Party leadership ... (Writings 1935-36, pp.199-201; emphasis in the original).

Trotsky often spoke of the "dialogue" which must go on in the class struggle between the revolutionary layers of the proletariat and the less advanced workers with illusions in reformist leaders. He pointed out that there was a significant difference between the reformist views of the leaders, who had a vested material interest in capitalist society, and similar views held by their followers. The views of the ranks were more transient, and their illusions could dissipate in the course of struggle through lessons drawn by the advanced layer.

CRITICAL SUPPORT IN LOCAL 100

In this tradition, our use of critical support in the Local 100 election meant support for a militant mobilization of fighting workers, not for the policies of New Directions. It was an open

attempt to win fellow workers by exposing ND in practice — a tactical change but not a fundamental shift in our struggle to counterpose revolutionary leadership to that of the reformists.

In using this tactic towards New Directions, we were fighting to prevent ND from strangling the gains won from the strike movement. This approach can be seen in *RTW*. In its first issue, Eric Josephson, running for union office in the Track Division, summed up our use of critical support:

In voting for ND, I solidarized with the ranks' desire to throw out the old guard and clear the way for further struggles. In no way does this mean any let-up in my hard and consistent opposition to ND's opportunist leadership. They are now on the hot seat. They can no longer excuse themselves from working for a militant fightback by blaming the old guard's obstruction. Transit workers will expect results, and I intend to help keep the pressure on ND. As Track Division Vice-Chair, I will be able to do so more effectively.

Toussaint says he wants to mobilize the ranks. Fine! I support every real step to fight the bosses. But I intend to oppose and expose any backsliding, sellouts or betrayals. I'll continue to warn my fellow workers to trust their own power and mobilization, not the pro-capitalist ND leadership.

We got rid of one bureaucratic obstacle. Now we have to prevent ND from becoming a new, entrenched bureaucracy. By placing demands on ND to defend the union and putting forward a strategy of mass action to fight the bosses, I aim to show that the real alternative to bureaucratic betrayals is to build a revolutionary leadership which puts workers' interests before the capitalist system and fights for socialism.

POST-ELECTION TACTICS

This article signaled our intention to continue after the election to help break the illusions of the ranks in Toussaint and ND. We have been working to draw the leadership into the open by supporting every step toward fighting the bosses while criticizing the inadequacy of the leadership's actions, their hesitancy and vacillations. We have highlighted Toussaint's motion toward re-bureaucratization of the local. We have attacked his political class collaborationism.

The same militancy that swept New Directions into power now threatens their position. Unlike the old bureaucracy, ND is actually expected to produce something. Workers' illusions in ND

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is a double-edged sword which can help to expose the reformist leaders. Every time Toussaint talks about fighting the bosses or building the struggle, we intend to be there challenging him to lead a real fightback. He is still capable of zigzagging in a militant direction for a moment or two; but even then workers must watch for his inevitable capitulations. When he betrays the workers' trust, advanced workers will be in a better position to convince the ranks to sweep him out of the way and build a revolutionary leadership.

The use of tactical weapons is not trickery. We are perfectly open about what we are doing. We always stand for class solidarity in the course of struggle. We do not drop out of the fight against the bosses because we do not like the leaders and their wavering policies. At this time in Local 100, our policy is to support the leadership when it actually fights the bosses but also to explain how it betrays that struggle. We are not blocking Toussaint from leading a fight that the members want; it is Toussaint who is already sabotaging that chance.

This tactical approach also comes out of Bolshevik experiences. Trotsky summarized, "With the masses — always; with the vacillating leaders — sometimes, but only so long as they stand at the head of the masses." He added that when they turn from their vacillating struggles (made necessary by the pressure of the masses) to hostile acts, we must relentlessly expose them. He referred to this as "the revolutionary essence" guiding the united front tactic. We can add that it guides all other tactical relationships with vacillating misleaders. These include critical support instances and our present tactical situation; at this juncture, revolutionaries simply do not have the power to force opportunist reformists into united fronts. However, there is nothing they can do to prevent us from giving them tactical support. The same revolutionary essence which guides our conduct during united fronts, guides us here too. We remain their misleaders' unwanted "supporters" and unceasing critics.

Tactics are an art as well as a science. Revolutionaries have to know when to withdraw them as well as when to use them. There is a point where circumstances change, when a particular tactic used as an attack on the betrayals of the leaders can actually become a cover for those betrayals. When that time comes, we will openly abandon our present tactic and consider others, above all those we have learned from the history of our class in struggle.

SECTARIAN ABSTENTION

A good way to illustrate the use of revolutionary tactics is to compare them with the approach of another left group in Local 100. In its press, the Spartacist League attacked our use of the critical support tactic during the TWU election.

The numerous self-proclaimed socialist groups that support the pro-court, pro-Democratic Party ND demonstrate their hostility to a class-struggle perspective. ... In a November 15 leaflet, a TWU supporter of the League for the Revolutionary Party criticized ND for being "not very militant" and even mentioned its anti-union suits, but called for support nonetheless, proclaiming: "Put New Directions to the Test." (*Workers Vanguard*, Feb. 16.)

This argument illustrates two things about the Spartacists. One, they believe that critical support means political support, demanding some level of political agreement with the reformist leaders rather than an attempt to figuratively hang them, as with Lenin. Underneath their super-radical rhetoric, the Spartacists are searching for reformists more to their liking whom they can support.

For authentic revolutionaries, it is the workers' struggle that counts; for the Spartacists it is the degree of affinity they have with the opportunists. Trotsky pointed out that sectarians and opportunists are the flip side of the same coin; often they end up side by side in the same political bed. And that leads to our second point.

The Spartacists' vaunted "class-struggle perspective" means little in practice other than harsh invective in their newspaper. The



Trotsky, pictured at his desk in 1936, championed Lenin's approach to revolutionary work in unions against both opportunists and sectarians.

SL has more supporters inside Local 100 than we do, but no one would ever know that when struggle breaks out. At key points they could have made a difference in preventing the bureaucrats from detouring the struggle. But for all the blather in their paper, inside the union they have been silent.

When we fought for a strike during the tumultuous events at the end of 1999, where were they? Did they speak for our strike motion at the mass membership meeting, let alone fight for it? No. Were they even present among the thousands of members who unanimously and enthusiastically voted for it? No one knows, because there wasn't a peep out of them inside the hall. In common with the ND-friendly opportunists on the left whom they denounce, the sectarian Spartacists found a way to avoid fighting for a strike the members demanded.

When the local election was being fought out, once again these armchair warriors abstained; they refused to use the Leninist rope to hang the opportunists. Instead they delivered yet another lecture to the working class, giving it an ultimatum about what it must do in order to win Spartacist blessings. Trotsky again got such sectarians right: "Active intervention into the actual struggle of the masses of workers is supplanted for [them] by propagandistic abstractions of a Marxist program."

To sum up, we are particularly interested in outlining the method of revolutionaries in practice because the level of class struggle around the world is rapidly changing. The struggles in the U.S. in general and within the TWU will soon accelerate beyond where they are now. We want to explain to advanced workers what we are doing because revolutionary methods will be even more important in the coming days.

There are times when little but a propagandistic approach can be used. Various groups on the left — good, bad and indifferent — were forced into a long period of an almost-pure propaganda existence, the necessity and dangers of which both Lenin and Trotsky warned about. Now, although groups remain small and must still concentrate on propaganda addressed to the advanced workers, it is becoming possible to actively lead in struggles. No revolutionary worthy of the name can refuse to intervene and fight. But for many in the changing scene, their impulse toward opportunist abuse of such chances is all-consuming. The turn to opportunism cannot be fought by fearful sectarianism. ●

PROLETARIAN REVOLUTION

Fall 2001

New Bureaucracy Threatens Workers' Militancy

Overturn in New York Transit Union

by Bob Wolfe

New York City's labor movement was rocked by a major upheaval last December, when the membership of Transport Workers Union (TWU) Local 100 kicked out the entrenched bureaucratic machine led by Willie James. New Directions (ND), the long-standing oppositional caucus which claims to be a militant "rank-and-file" group, decisively defeated the old guard, taking control of the local's Executive Board and most key positions.

ND's presidential candidate Roger Toussaint won around 60 percent of the vote. He easily beat the faltering James gang, which had split between James and his vice-president, Eddie Melendez, who ran with the backing of Sonny Hall, the TWU's international president and former head of Local 100.

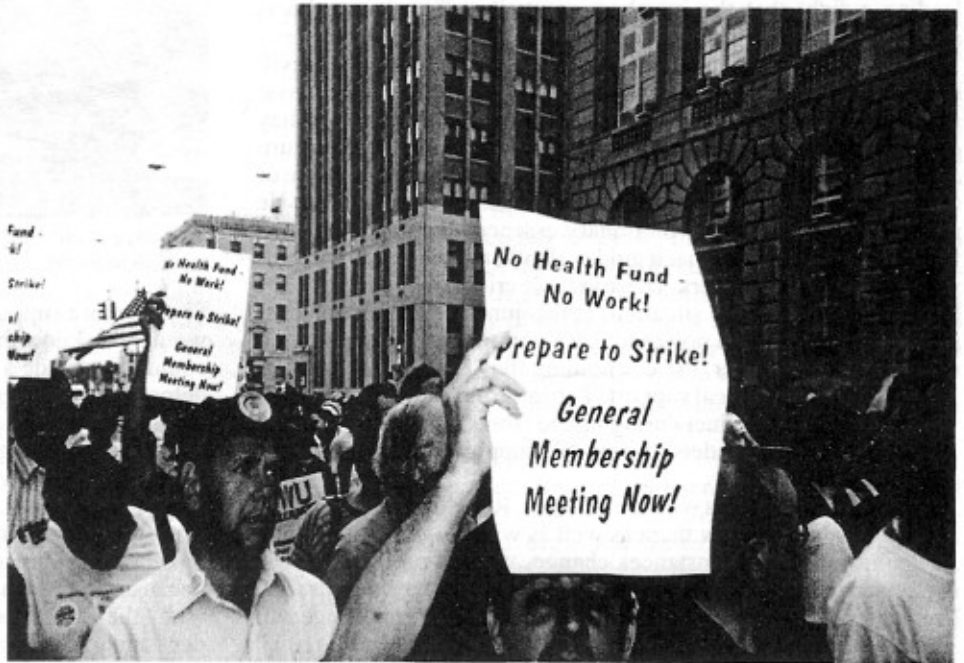
In their overwhelming vote for New Directions, workers repudiated Hall, James and the sellout contract negotiated in December 1999. (See *Proletarian Revolution* No. 60.) The massive near-strike movement of November-December 1999 had shown the workers' ability to mobilize against their bosses, Mayor Giuliani and the other capitalist politicians, the cops and the courts. All were clearly terrified that the city would be shut down. The workers' struggle was derailed by the union bureaucracy, which pushed through a contract whose uglier provisions have become even more apparent with time. Added to this was the members' disgust at the looting of dues money under the James regime.

NEW DIRECTIONS' BETRAYAL

Ironically, New Directions rose to power on the basis of an uprising it failed to lead. As we documented in *PR 60*, ND refused to take the lead and carry out the will of the membership for a strike. At the decisive moment, after workers unanimously voted to strike in a tumultuous mass meeting, ND handed the initiative back to James's Executive Board, which they knew would ignore the vote. What it couldn't win openly at the membership meeting New Directions accomplished by duplicity afterward. Thus the strike movement was strangled.

The strike motion had been made by a supporter of the League for the Revolutionary Party (LRP). We had argued and fought for a strike for a long time, in counterposition to ND. As the contract vote approached, our pro-strike stance became very popular, and workers began taking our views more seriously. Years of anti-communist suspicion began to fade. However, we and other militants were still far too weak to push aside both the James and ND misleaders and lead workers in carrying out the strike they wanted.

Despite ND's betrayal, its reputation as the strong and militant opposition was markedly inflated after the event, partly because Giuliani, Hall and James scapegoated ND as strike-happy



New York City transit workers hold signs distributed by LRP supporters calling for strike preparations against management attacks.

militants, even communists. And even though their strike movement was aborted, transit workers had a sense of having driven the bosses to the wall. So even though ND had stabbed the strike vote in the back and was running a low-key campaign, its electoral victory was nevertheless a product of the fighting movement. Attacks on ND for being strike-happy hadn't turned off workers as in the past but instead had cemented their support for the Toussaint slate.

This situation posed the classic challenge for revolutionaries: how to help our fellow workers become conscious of their own power and break their illusions in the betraying leaders. For this we used the tactic of "critical support." (See the article "Revolutionary vs. Reformist Methods in the Unions" below.) Our goal was both to promote the struggle and to win other advanced workers to see the need for a genuine anti-capitalist — that is, revolutionary — leadership.

TOUSSAINT'S AIM TO TAME

With New Directions' victory, these tasks have taken on added urgency. In the face of unrelenting attacks by the Metropolitan Transit Authority (MTA) bosses, workers are looking for militant leadership. Toussaint has retained some of his image by staging limited mobilizations, including a one-day strike of a private bus line that won a partial victory. He has to show enough clout to slow down the MTA's demands for more concessions, while avoiding the direct confrontation he fears.

As one path to temper the workers' militancy, Toussaint is urging them to rely upon "friends of labor," the politicians of the

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