

NZ Socialist Students' Conference

More than 60 leftists from around New Zealand gathered in Wellington for the country's second annual Socialist Students' Conference in mid-May 1993. The event was organized by the Bolshevik Club, the campus group affiliated to the Permanent Revolution Group (PRG), New Zealand section of the International Bolshevik Tendency. It featured three days of lively discussion and debate, and was one of the largest and most representative gatherings of the New Zealand far left for several years.

In addition to many unaffiliated socialists, there was a sizeable contingent from Workers Power (New Zealand/Aotearoa), an affiliate of the League for a Revolutionary Communist International. Also present were representatives from the Communist Party of New Zealand, until recently an Albanian-line Stalinist formation that is now moving in a social-democratic direction. Members from the Communist League, adherents of the U.S. Socialist Workers Party, also attended.

Conference sessions addressed such issues as the situation of South Africa's black working class, the rise of

fascism in Europe and the oppression of women. However, the central question discussed was the collapse of Stalinism and the victory of counterrevolution in the former Soviet bloc. Our comrades' hard defensist position provided a focus for sharp debate.

Most of those who attended the conference found it enlightening and educational. While there were no dramatic shifts in the immediate political terrain (no splits or fusions were announced), the exchanges contributed to raising the level of debate within the left. The conference demonstrated the value of the left coming together, not to paper over differences with ambiguous "unity" doubletalk, but to engage in the kind of frank and open programmatic confrontation and political struggle which sharpens, rather than blurs, the line of demarcation between Marxism and revisionism. Such a process can make an important contribution to the education and development of revolutionary cadres and the creation of a vanguard for the working class. It is an example worth emulating. ■