

SPARTACIST



NUMBER 14

NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 1969

10 CENTS

Seize the Opportunity!

REVOLUTIONARY REGROUPMENT

The pressing need in this country for a united Leninist vanguard could never be more heavily underscored than at the present moment. In the past two years, it is clear, the major direction of social motion has been toward the right, with political and ethnic-racial polarization increasing. The country is perhaps more sharply divided now than at any time since the early years of Roosevelt's "New Deal." Flag-waving patriotism with its blatant racist overtones is back in style; the Nixon administration has reassembled the Bourbon Dixiecrat/reactionary Republican alliance; "law and order" is the catchword; and the Black Panther Party faces a government attempt at root-and-branch destruction. All sections of society are deeply split over Viet Nam policy, giving rise to the seeming aberration of the anti-war bourgeoisie's Viet Nam Moratorium. In the midst of this deepening polarization the working class, rebellious and in motion, is turning to reactionary demagogues like Wallace for lack of a revolutionary alternative.

In general, the U.S. left-wing movement, pragmatic and opportunist, has moved to the right in keeping with the general drift. However, in reflexive reaction to the prevailing mood, an impulse to the left has found expression within most of the organized radical groups. Much recent evident fracturing has resulted from leftward-moving internal forces clashing with stand-pat or opportunist groupings within their organizations. The Spartacist tendency itself crystallized in opposition to the Socialist Workers Party's capitulation to Castroism, Black Nationalism and middle-class politics which marked its transformation from revolutionary Trotskyism to revisionism. In fact right/left tensions have recently appeared even in the remains of such fossilized reformist groups as the Socialist Party and Communist Party, and even the Socialist Labor Party has had two recent substantial breakaways.

But perhaps the clearest expression of social motion refracted into left-wing politics is the SDS split in Chicago. The split took place over perhaps the two most fundamental issues facing revolutionaries today—the Black question and an orientation toward the working class. The result was a right/left split which has driven home to thousands of would-be revolutionaries the imperative necessity of political struggle and clarification. The winner in the SDS dispute was the Boston SDS, whose non-exclusionism embodied a recognition of this basic principle of political conduct. However, the behavior of the right wing—already split into violently hostile rival factions, the "Revolutionary Youth Movement" and the "Weathermen"—has undoubtedly served to disorient and demoralize many young radicals and drive them out of political activity.

Groupings like the Boston SDS and its Worker-Student Alliance caucus, and left tendencies in other organizations, are open to revolutionary politics. But simple gut-level "leftism" and a crude working-class perspective only pose the question. Both major factions in SDS have attempted to go beyond mindless activism toward a Marxist programmatic solution, yet large sections of them appear unable to reach beyond an amazed rediscovery of the arch-betrayers of the communist movement, Stalin and his various epigones! Nor was this abysmal nonsense separated out by an otherwise clarifying, if unfortunate, split: the class-conscious WSA is led by the Progressive Labor Party, whose ambivalence toward its most recent impulse toward a proletarian revolutionary line places it in the excruciating contradiction of maintaining Mao and Stalin as official heroes while often surreptitiously (and opportunistically) sweeping into the

(Continued Next Page)

Spartacist League Conference . . . Page 4

... REGROUP

dustbin the grosser revisionist practices most characteristic of these self-same idols! (e.g., the bloc of four classes, the theory of the two-stage revolution, peasant-oriented "Third Worldism," the popular front, violence against left critics). An oscillation between a proletarian impulse and the tired old politics of Stalinism is the inevitable result of seeking a revolutionary practice in the anti-revolutionary dogma of Maoism. In fact, in the idiocies of Rudd's Weathermen or Avakian's Revolutionary Union, PL can see the journey to the Maoist shrine down the same path PL once unambiguously walked, and only marvel that these new Red Guards are more orthodox than they!

But PL is by no means the only organization with contradictions in its make-up. A group like the "third camp" International Socialists, like its sometime ally the Labor Committee of L. Marcus, can draw in young radicals on the basis of a revolutionary facade, although in essential thrust both groups might be best described as the extreme left wing of social democracy.

Left-Communist Regroupment

It would be sectarian and blatantly anti-Leninist to passively accept a situation which allows would-be Marxists to persist in following a program which falls qualitatively short of a revolutionary line. To reverse this process, we call for political and theoretical polarization of the ostensibly revolutionary groupings, leading ultimately to a left-communist regroupment of all organizations, factions, tendencies and individuals who stand on an anti-revisionist Marxist program, toward the formation of a Leninist vanguard party. The *objective* preconditions for such a process are, we believe, abundantly fulfilled; however, the *subjective* desire to transcend the existing organizational line-ups is manifestly lacking on the part of many of those who should seek such a regroupment. And the opportunity is transitory.

What "Regroupment" Means

It should not be thought that a call for regroupment means a cessation of political and theoretical struggle; on the contrary, only a conscious strategy of increased polarization separating the future cadre of the Marxist movement from the opportunists and garbage will make any future unity feasible. By analogy, we might say that perhaps the most deserving victim of the SDS split was the postulate—an ideological cornerstone of the New Left—that fundamental political divisions of an earlier era and other movements could be casually relegated to the scrap heap.

For ignoring history carries no guarantee history will reciprocate in like

manner! After the Communist Party of France sold out the revolutionary upheaval of May 1968, many of the outlawed groups to the left of the CP felt the need for unity to counterpose a mass working-class party to the Stalinists. At this juncture a great opportunity was derailed, as the *Lutte Ouvriere* tendency compromised themselves fatally. Rather than proposing unity on the basis of a proletarian Marxist program (that is, the Leninist method of splits and fusions) they retreated to a search for the lowest common denominator, gratuitously abandoning their political positions in favor of the hoped-for programless collective. Rather than unity this brought chaos and a swelling of the ranks of the revisionists within the Trotskyist movement; in the bargain *LO* actually placed themselves to the right of the revisionists.

Mutual Amnesty

Such a "unity" is of course no unity at all, but merely an ultimately defective strategy for an unprincipled coalition for the purpose of dodging political issues, a mutual amnesty from the testing in practice of competing theories and programs. Speaking of his own struggle within the Russian movement between his own faction and a grouping of "pro-party Mensheviks," Lenin stated that the task facing his group was to organize militants around "a definite party line." "Unity," he said further, "is inseparable from its ideological foundation." The political differences which had formerly existed between Lenin and the "pro-party Mensheviks" were resolved in the course of extended common work and theoretical struggle, as he had anticipated. And while Plekhanov and a few other unreconstructed leaders of this Menshevik grouping soon broke with the Leninists, the bulk of its rank and file came over squarely to the revolutionaries. It was precisely this fusion in 1912 which hardened the political separation and forged the revolutionary faction into the Bolshevik party. This fusion was not different in kind from the infinitely more famous entry of Trotsky's *Mezhrayontsi* (Inter-District group) into Lenin's party in the summer of 1917, which set the stage for the successful October Revolution which followed it.

United Front Tactic

In the past few months the left has found itself bombarded with calls for "united actions," for a lessening of "factionalism" and, so far as SDS is concerned, an end to the pitched battles between competing tendencies. It is ironic but no doubt typical that such calls for an increase in political consciousness have emanated from exactly those people who have done their damndest over the years to ridicule and destroy that consciousness whose lack

SPARTACIST

A Bimonthly Organ
of Revolutionary Marxism

EDITORS: David Cunningham;

Managing, Elizabeth Gordon;

Assistant, Joel Salant;

West Coast, Christopher Kinder;

Southern, John Sheridan.

BUSINESS MANAGER: Elaine West.

Subscription: 50¢ yearly. Bundle rates for 10 or more copies. Main address: Box 1377, G.P.O., New York, N.Y. 10001. Telephone: WA 5-2426. Western address: P.O. Box 852, Berkeley, Calif. 94701. Telephone: 525-5243. Southern address: P.O. Box 8165, U.T. Sta., Austin, Texas, 78712. Telephone: 476-9714.

Published by the Central Committee of the Spartacist League. Opinions expressed in signed articles do not necessarily represent an editorial viewpoint.



Number 14 Nov.-Dec. 1969

they now bemoan (as, for example, the *Guardian*, whose shameless "reportage" of the SDS split continued their whitewash of earlier efforts by the old SDS leadership to purge PL from their organization).

"Unity of action" among left organizations—when there is a real basis of political agreement on the specific issue—is essential to the crystallization of a revolutionary vanguard. United fronts as formulated by Lenin and Trotsky had as their main goal the regroupment of both the cadre and the rank and file of non-communist workers' organizations into the communist party, by demonstrating *in action* that only the communists were willing to carry the struggles through to the end. The slogan of the united front was "march separately, strike together," meaning that these groups cooperated against the common enemy, but were not politically subordinated either to each other or to a common organization.

The class line is decisive here. Revisionists try to subordinate the working class to the liberal bourgeoisie or other sectors of the ruling class by means of popular fronts. Thus the CP, under the slogan of an "anti-monopoly coalition," has fought the emergence of a labor party by supporting liberal Democrats against "reactionaries"; the Black Panther Party, panicked and disoriented by fierce government repression and lacking the bulwark of ideological clarity, calls for a "united front against fascism," a cover for capitulation to the CP in order to seek as allies the "respectable" liberals—that force which willingly abets and apologizes for their persecution!; the SWP ferociously op-

poses the introduction of anti-imperialist, pro-socialist politics into their seemingly endless aggregate of classless "peace" actions while throwing open the door to politicians like McCarthy and Lindsay. The purpose of all such popular fronts is to blur political issues. A revolutionary regroupment must forthrightly stand on a decisive repudiation of these and like betrayals.

Political Basis

As our contribution to furthering a process of principled regroupment of revolutionaries, we raise the following political points as the basis of such a regroupment:

1. For Democratic Rights Within the Workers' Movement! The task of the left is to fight for working-class consciousness. Consistent with this aim must be the repudiation of gangsterism, which substitutes physical for political confrontation. Exclusionism (and the "cult of violence" so typical of the frenzied petty-bourgeoisie) exposes its practitioners as afraid that their politics will not stand the test of open political debate and competition in action.

Concomitantly, the left must repudiate the method of oversimplification and slander against ideological opponents. To attack those with different programs as subjectively "racist," "counter-revolutionaries," "police agents," "proto-fascists," etc. is to obscure the issues and play into the hands of the anti-communists — e.g., social democrats, pro-capitalist liberals, etc.— whose pet attack against the ostensible revolutionaries has always been that the pro-Leninist left is "as bad as the right wing," "only the reverse side of the coin," etc. This is not to downgrade the necessity to struggle against wrong politics, which certainly serve objectively to disorient and weaken the revolutionary cause. But it is a far cry from this to the allegation—always so appealing to those whose political education has been in the Stalinist movement—that opponent organizations and individuals are subjectively trying to do the work of the enemy. Likewise, regardless of political disagreement, all honest militants must mobilize for the defense of other left-wing tendencies against reactionary terrorism or bourgeois repression.

Revolutionaries must fight the imposition of organizational separations where political differences no longer hold sway. All organizations claiming adherence to revolutionary principle must declare their willingness to participate in and actively initiate united actions where political agreement exists, and must refuse to permit necessary political polemic and criticism to be construed as a bar to principled united fronts.

2. For a Working-Class Orientation!

The basis of a revolutionary perspective must be the reaffirmation of Lenin and Trotsky's understanding of *proletarian* revolution as the only feasible model. Would-be revolutionaries must forthrightly reject the Guevarist-type "peasant guerrilla road to socialism" and the petty-bourgeois nationalism of bureaucratic Stalinist leaderships.

The central tactic in fighting for communist hegemony in the working class must be an orientation toward building *fractions* within the trade union movement, rather than toward the doomed, sterile approach of abstract propagandism from the outside propounded by the SLP, Marcus' Labor Committee and others. The concept of *transitional demands*—i.e., demands which lead to revolutionary consciousness and are realizable only through struggle—is vital here in avoiding the otherwise inevitable frantic oscillation between minimal, economist tail-ending of the labor bureaucracy and face-saving ultra-revolutionary rhetoric. Revolutionaries must fight against the intervention of the capitalist state in the trade unions both directly (as an "impartial" arbiter of disputes between the corrupt labor bureaucrats and the rank and file) and indirectly through the class collaborationism of the bureaucrats. The reliance of the workers on supposedly "pro-labor" capitalist politicians must be broken by fighting for independent working-class political action.

3. Defeat Black Nationalism by Class-Struggle Politics! Several groupings on the left found themselves in substantial agreement in condemning the recent pro-CP turn of the Black Panthers. In general these groups have also come—unwillingly and after a history of opportunism on the question—to a realization of the necessity to break with the dead-end Black Nationalism of the sort slavishly tail-ended by RYM and the SWP. The petty-bourgeois separatist, anti-class approach of these demagogues has assisted in compounding the racism of the white working class and driving natural class allies further from each other. Likewise the classless demand for "community control" does not remain classless in a class society and can be infused with simple reactionary content as well as gutless Populism.

Yet aspiring revolutionaries must utilize in the struggle against Black Nationalist illusions the recognition of Lenin's dictum that the chauvinism of the oppressed is not identical to the chauvinism of the oppressor. Revolutionaries must transcend any impulse toward colorblind, oversimplified "workerism" in favor of a sensitivity to the pervasive *special oppression* of black workers.

4. For a Class Line on the War! In the past virtually every organization has climbed on the bandwagon of op-

portunism, middle-class anti-war politics, although none has exceeded the shameless machinations of the ex-Trotskyist SWP. Similarly, the left let itself be intimidated by the overwhelming mood of moralistic, anti-draft "resistance" confrontationism, refusing to raise the alternative of anti-war struggle in the army among working-class draftees until the creation willy-nilly of massive anti-war sentiment among G.I.s themselves forced the issue.

Those who are sincere in their anti-capitalist intentions must break from their past mistakes as they would have the working class break from its misleaders. They must learn from the spectacle of avowed revolutionaries demanding a classless "peace" and catering to the social chauvinism of "Bring Our Boys Home Now" the necessity for a policy of *revolutionary defeatism* toward imperialism and a strategy of linking the so-called "war madness" to an understanding of the capitalist system with a program of working-class-oriented anti-war demands, to break anti-war militants from middle-class liberalism to proletarian intransigence.

5. For Internationalism! Those who recognize the nature of capitalism as an international system must give more than lip service to the need for an international revolutionary movement to fight it. They must condemn the pragmatic know-nothing anti-internationalism of such groups as the Labor Committee, and also the slavish worship of *what is* which leads the RYM-Weatherman mob to betray those they profess to "serve" by issuing blank checks to the Stalinist mis-leaders of the "Third World." They must carry further their condemnation of revisionism and recognize it as the inevitable result of a belief in "Socialism in One Country," as the national bureaucracies desperately bargain away other revolutions in exchange for temporary curtailment of imperialism's appetites toward the gains of their own. The urgent need for communist unity against imperialism presupposes political revolution in the deformed workers states to replace Stalinist nationalism with the revolutionary will of the international working class.

6. For a Vanguard Party! The theoretical and organizational continuity of the revolutionary movement cannot be preserved except through a Leninist vanguard. Without an internationalist vanguard party the spontaneous revolutionary aspirations of the working masses cannot effect the overthrow of capitalism. Class-conscious revolutionaries agreed on the essentials of principle and program must agree to join together in a democratic and centralist collective of those united in struggle on the basis of the above points. ■

Spartacist National Conference

The second National Conference of the Spartacist League was held in New York City over the Labor Day weekend. Attendance was large and representative, with over 40 delegates and observers present from all parts of the country. The main work of the Conference centered on the discussion and adoption of two main documents, a perspectives document, "Development and Tactics of the Spartacist League," and a working set of Organizational Rules. In addition to the presentation and discussion of these documents in the main reports, the body also broke up into smaller commissions during the evenings. Regional commissions discussed the perspectives and problems of the Western and Southern organizations; comrades active in SDS, trade unions and women's liberation work pooled their experiences and debated the application of our politics to their local situations.

Internal Consolidation

The Spartacist tendency was thrust into independent public existence by its expulsion from the Socialist Workers Party in 1963-64. After our attempts to crystallize an international anti-revisionist tendency of the Trotskyist movement were sabotaged by Gerry Healy of the so-called "International" Committee [see SPARTACIST #6-10], we formalized our existence as the Spartacist League at our first National Conference, held in Chicago over Labor Day 1966.

The 1969 Conference, actually our fifth gathering of national scope, in a sense completes the founding of the Spartacist League. Throughout our existence we have had simultaneously to perform two related tasks: to intervene in the mass and left movements while at the same time struggling internally for the consolidation of several variegated political elements into a homogeneous, fighting propaganda group. Given our very limited reservoir of cadres with prior experience in the communist movement and class struggle, the assimilation of relatively new and inexperienced comrades has been an enormous undertaking.

The recent events which have polarized the entire left-wing movement were reflected in the SL Conference as well. Without prior design, the Conference evidenced a quantitative move to the left—a hardening of the organization and its resolve to struggle. Thus the SL, having hitherto been essentially indifferent to matters of demoralizing personal life styles, felt it necessary to adopt a hard line against them, in order to effectively intervene in the decomposing New Left where dissolution into the anti-political petty-bourgeois milieu

is a prevalent counter-revolutionary choice.

The Conference reaffirmed as doubly urgent our responsibility to intervene in SDS, to which we first turned several years ago, recognizing it today as a hot, transitory opportunity to win additional forces to the consistent revolutionary program of Trotskyism.

Basic Documents

In our brief history, the Spartacist tendency has made several decisive documentary contributions to present-day Marxism. The analyses and projections of these documents have already been concretely tested, and they have proven correct in all essentials and extraordinarily prescient in their observations. Our three main political resolutions previous to the 1969 Conference—"Toward Rebirth of the Fourth International" (1963), the SL "Declaration of Principles" (1966) and "Black and Red—Class Struggle Road to Negro Freedom" (1967)—will be reprinted shortly as a separate pamphlet, #9 (part I) of our *Marxist Bulletin* series.

The two documents adopted at the 1969 Conference round out this material and constitute a significant step in the achievement of a rock-hard propaganda group. The "Organizational Rules and Guidelines" is a codification of the evolved democratic centralist functioning of the SL. The perspectives document, "Development and Tactics of the Spartacist League," of which some characteristic excerpts are given below, constitutes a living summary of the analyses, program and tactics of the SL. These two documents are now in production as a pamphlet and are available from the Spartacist League for fifty cents.

"The SL rejects the Pabloist dictum that the 'colonial world' is the 'epicenter' of world revolution. While the extreme economic difficulties and absence of bourgeois-democratic political facade may provoke sometimes violent manifestations of resistance to oppression, the super-exploited peoples cannot achieve liberation except at tremendous cost and with severe deformations so long as the military and industrial power of the advanced countries remains in the hands of the capitalist class. . . .

"The Maoist 'Cultural Revolution' was a litmus test for Trotskyists. Only our tendency pointed out *at the time* the essential character of the 'Cultural Revolution'—an intra-bureaucracy fight and purge of the Chinese CP. With the further development of open armed border clashes between the Soviet Union and China, the need of the workers to overthrow the narrow, nationalist bureaucracies has become even more im-

perative and obvious as the only way to create communist unity against imperialism.

"At the present time, the Viet Nam war and the extreme diplomatic and internal difficulties of the Chinese state have forced the Maoists to maintain greater hostility to imperialism and verbally disclaim the USSR's avowed policy of 'peaceful coexistence' while themselves peacefully coexisting with Japan. However, we must warn against the growing objective possibility—given the

A LETTER

Iowa

Recently I obtained #13 of the SPARTACIST and found it very interesting. I have been active in SDS for two years and in WSA for one year and, after reading your paper, I am in agreement with your statement that PL is adopting some Trotskyist positions, such as the view that criticism in the revolutionary ranks is necessary and not divisive and the position of proletarian internationalism, as opposed to nationalistic communism. Furthermore, in the November issue of *PL* magazine, the following statement is made concerning China: "What is the essence of a People's Democratic Dictatorship other than that of being a form of the dictatorship of the proletariat?" (page 12) PL thus affirms that the Trotskyites in China were right in calling for the dictatorship of the proletariat (and Mao was wrong) and go on to say, "There is still only one road to power . . . the road of the dictatorship of the proletariat." This is nothing but Trotskyism.

Mixed in with the Trotskyism is, of course, Stalinism. After reading your paper and reading some more Trotsky, I find myself in tentative agreement with you Spartacists. The positions of PL that I have been in agreement with seem to me to be basically Trotskyist and the positions I disagree with seem to be Stalinist. As a result, I am interested in learning more about the Spartacist League and would like a year's subscription to your paper plus back issues from the last year, if you have them.

Yours in struggle,
J.J.

tremendous industrial and military capacity of the Soviet Union—of a U.S. deal *with China*. Should the imperialists adjust their policies in terms of their long-run interests . . . the Chinese would be as willing as the Russians are at present to build 'Socialism in



Photos by Libby Scheier

SECOND NATIONAL CONFERENCE of the Spartacist League in session.

One Country' through deals with imperialism at the expense of internationalism.

"The SL supports the right of nations to self-determination, following Lenin's method on the national question. Like Lenin, our reason for supporting self-determination for oppressed national groupings is in order to get ethnic antagonisms off the agenda and replaced by class issues. Therefore, we at no time abdicate our responsibility to our *class* by tail-ending petty-bourgeois nationalist movements, but instead fight for proletarian hegemony. Thus, for example, the SL supports the right of the Ibo nation to self-determination, but we separate ourselves absolutely from the Biafran political regime, pointing out that national independence without the appropriation of the ruling class is very far from socialism, as the Algerian example has shown.

"Central to the task of international political regroupment is the ideological destruction of Pabloist revisionism within the Trotskyist movement. . . . The dominant section of the Trotskyist movement . . . reacted impressionistically to the restabilization of capitalism and the Stalinist expansion to theorize a limited role for Trotskyists as a left pressure group on the Stalinist parties. In a fundamental sense, Pabloism is a reaction of despair to the previously unexpected strength and resilience of both capitalism and Stalinism. . . .

Women's Liberation

"The SL recognizes not only the actual economic superexploitation of women workers, but in addition the myriad of political and social factors which have contributed to women's oppression. In keeping with the traditional Bolshevik position, we call for transitional women's organizations to struggle against sexual oppression in the context of the general class divisions in society, noting that the existing radical women's organizations have

generally not progressed past a concern . . . with the particular social problems of middle-class radical women. . . . The SL notes that the main social unit for the maintenance and propagation of women's oppression is the *family*. . . .

Black Panthers

"The current frame-up of 21 members of the Black Panther Party in New York and the several-stage repressions in California should be recognized as part of a nation-wide pattern. The Panthers, a heterogeneous grouping, are the only major black organization which has not been simply bought off by the government—i.e., they are black nationalist because they believe in black nationalism, not because they have learned that fake-militant rhetoric pays off. Further, of the organizations which presume to speak for the ghetto, the Panthers are the only one which actually have any semblance of a mass base. We must defend the Panthers unconditionally against the campaign of frame-up and assassination directed against them. Included in our defense, however, must be our strongly critical assessment of how they are defending themselves: the call for a Popular Front to include class collaboration with Democrats and Republicans, and the confusion of brittle, racist bourgeois democracy with actual fascism.

" . . . the establishment of black caucuses in several important trade unions is a . . . contradictory phenomenon. Impelled both by the legitimate grievances and oppression of blacks as workers and by the mood of petty-bourgeois black separatism, such caucuses—potentially vehicles for militant rank and file struggle against the bosses and conservative labor 'leaders'—can also be turned into organizers of black scabbing, dual unionism or simple union-busting. In several industries, most notably auto, black workers have shown themselves to be more willing than whites to engage in militant struggle

and thus potential leaders in the fight for class demands, but nationalist moods have channeled this militancy instead into increasingly *separate* struggles.

Trade Union Program

"Except in acutely pre-revolutionary situations, the working class tends to maintain its allegiance to, and organization in, its traditional organizational forms—e.g. and principally, the organized labor movement. Therefore the Marxists . . . always understand the necessity to fight for their program within the labor unions and against the incumbent union bureaucrats. . . .

" . . . where possible we prefer to work in labor unions through intra-union caucuses of SL members and other militants organized on the basis of agreement with a specific program of transitional demands. A caucus provides the best organizational form for counterposing to the incumbent leadership a militant program, making it clear that it is not simply personal positions, but the political and action program of an organized grouping which competes for leadership with the bureaucracy of the union. Such caucuses form the basis for factory committees in times of greater upheaval, the expressions of dual power on the factory level. Through caucuses, union militants attracted by one aspect of the program of the SL can function in an organized way with our comrades in struggle, without having to accept the full program of the SL.

"The union caucus struggles for union democracy and militant rank and file control of the union. The caucus must expose the union bureaucrats as unwilling and unable to fight for the felt needs of the workers, and must transcend simple bread-and-butter unionism through a program of transitional demands linking proletarian class consciousness with a unified perspective of general social struggle against capitalism. . . ."

... SSEU

(Continued from Page 8)

per cent of the ballots cast. Most of those who voted "yes" had seen no attempt by the SSEU to mobilize for a fight and really believed that a renewed effort to fight the City would be made if, and only if, the two unions were joined under the aegis of the larger District Council 37.

Within the SSEU, supporters of the Socialist Workers Party, the Communist Party, Progressive Labor, the Black Caucus and the Workers League all joined forces with Morgenstern to lead the membership into a conservative, bureaucratic trap which has fundamentally altered the ability of the membership to control union policy by emasculating the delegates and leaving twenty officers as the basic policy-making body of the union. The formerly powerful delegates (shop stewards) have been relegated to a token role as the Delegates Assembly, which in practice is basically limited to after-the-fact objections to leadership decisions—a standard AFL-CIO set-up.

Unity of Staff?

Following the merger vote, a Joint Bargaining Committee of Local 371, SSEU and Local 1549 (the recently-formed city-wide craft union of clerical staff) was formed and Victor Gotbaum, Executive Director of DC 37, "automatically" became chief negotiator. In practice the leadership of Local 1549 hung back from the alliance, and subsequently broke from the alliance altogether to make a separate settlement. A rotten contract negotiated by Gotbaum was railroaded through a stormy membership meeting of 1549 on 10 February. The clerks, promised an upgrading, got a contract that has a clause permitting layoffs and a much-touted \$6000 minimum. In fact, the actual starting base salary is \$4600, with \$6000 reached by 1 July 1971—i.e., a total raise of \$1100 over 2½ years!

Cutting away all the social-work jargon, the City's desire to revamp welfare is motivated basically by a desire to cut the total welfare budget, of which employee wages are a significant part. The tremendous growth in government employment nationally has coincided with a tightening of available money because of inflation and cutbacks due to the Viet Nam war. Budget deficits have been an increasing problem, especially in NYC where 13 per cent of the city population receives welfare. With the increased activity of public employee unions nationally forcing their wages up, there has been a general tendency to seek to replace higher-paid unionized workers with a combination of lower-paid titles and non-unionized "more indigenous people" (in the words of Commissioner Goldberg).

Specifically, the NYC welfare reor-

ganization plan provided for the bulk of the caseworkers' work to be transferred to clerical titles and Case Aides (many of whom are welfare recipients), whose 1969 starting salaries are a poverty-level \$4600! In contrast, the average caseworker will receive \$8550 this year. This would enable the caseworker staff to be reduced from 8000 to 2400 by stopping all new hiring after 7 January 1969 and letting the average 30 to 40 per cent turnover take its toll, accelerated by increasing workloads and harassment. Affected Unit Supervisors would be cut from 1600 to as few as 300. Obviously, the reaction of the unions holding these job titles was crucial. Luckily for the City, these plans for slashes in welfare coincided with the subsuming of the SSEU bargaining under the more cooperative direction of DC 37's Victor Gotbaum. To show that the City rewards its friends, DC 37 has been promised the "agency shop," whereby the equivalent in dues is deducted from the pay of all employees. This would represent \$6,000,000 annually to Gotbaum's treasury, in return for his delivering the goods for Lindsay, whom he has publicly endorsed for mayor.

A Non-Contract

The unions permitted the City to initiate the new system, even before the membership had a chance to vote on the contract. The only joint membership meeting that took place, on 27 January, was abruptly adjourned in the middle of discussion by Morgenstern and his flunkies, when floor opposition threatened a reversal of the leadership's policies.

By the time that the membership was finally presented the contract for a vote, on 6 June 1969, it had become painfully obvious that they had been betrayed—that the "new strength" promised by "unity of staff" after the merger was nothing but a hoax. Disgusted, many workers said they would just wait for the money and get out. The efforts of militants opposed to the contract were insufficient to counter the overwhelming demoralization and defeatism of most of the membership. Despite the fact that the vote was taken in each center, less than half the membership even bothered to vote, and the contract passed 3100 to 800. Only 3 centers carried a "no" vote and two of those had Militant Caucus leaderships.

Under the new contract, the City has been given virtually a free hand to experiment and carry out its plans. A Joint Reorganization Committee of the three unions and the City, plus an "impartial" chairman, will deal with all complaints on workload, transfers, demotions, etc. The jurisdiction of the Committee is specifically limited to "discussion of the practical impact" of new policies, *after* the fact. Decisions of the "impartial" chairman are binding and

not subject to grievance clauses. The key issue of workload was a complete give-away. Instead of the hard-won protection of caseload maximums, there is now *no limit whatsoever* except "that which is unreasonably excessive or unduly burdensome," a phrase straight from previous "model contracts" offered by the City. Unlimited involuntary mass and individual transfers are permitted in order to "equalize" caseloads and personnel. Also included is a no-strike pledge promising not to "engage in any strikes, slowdowns, work stoppages..." and a Management Rights clause. If all this isn't enough, a new Bureau of Verification and Review is being set up to function as a squad to double-check work performed and investigate and harass workers. The bribe for all this is a substantial pay increase—at least \$2000, under various guises, over two years. In return the City has received carte blanche for its policies, and the down-grading of the general wage structure in the Department.

Reorganization Catastrophe

Despite maximum cooperation by the Gotbaum-Morgenstern leadership, the City scheme that was touted as a "progressive step" by Morgenstern has after ten months fallen flat on its face, leaving in its wake a workload crisis of a scale not seen since pre-SSEU days. The City recently announced officially that there are no plans to continue with the second stage of the reorganization. (The first stage consisted of removing from the caseloads so-called "minimum service" cases, leaving workers with a more concentrated workload of problem cases—in effect, a speed-up.) Meanwhile, staff has been reduced by at least 30 per cent and caseloads are rapidly approaching *twice* the level permitted by the 1967-68 contract, while the job freeze continues.

Thus prodded, the Delegates Assembly voted unanimously on 2 October for a city-wide job action to "dump" all cases in excess of the 1968 contractual level of 60, in order to force the City to re-open hiring. In doing so they were overriding a series of conservative recommendations by the union officers. However Gotbaum informed the SSEU-371 Executive Committee that such action would be in violation of the contract and that he would not support the union if the City responded with punitive action. Gotbaum stressed that he and DC 37 had endorsed Mayor Lindsay for re-election and would refuse to upset this applecart. With a sigh of relief, the SSEU-371 leadership caved in and on their recommendation a *reversal* of the job action was passed by the Delegates Assembly on 9 October!

Merger and the Fake Lefts

Welfare staff are now witnessing the essence of the merger with DC 37. All those forces who took part in the deception of the workers by lending a left

cover to a basically defeatist move share direct responsibility for this gigantic sellout. Supporters of Progressive Labor and the Workers League were the first to raise the question of re-merger with Local 371 (opposing the perspective of a fight for the SSEU to organize all the welfare titles on a militant industrial union basis, as advocated by the Militant Caucus). They were willing to sacrifice the interests of 9000 SSEU members to a mechanical application of "returning to the [polluted] mainstream of the labor movement," to get themselves a bigger pond to fish in. The SSEU leadership, under first Mage and then Morgenstern, was quick to recognize their own interests in this suggestion, since they desperately sought the calmer waters of DC 37 and a policy of "labor peace." All three forces combined in "Staff for Merger," putting PL and the WL in a rotten left-right bloc that ran straight to the Democratic Party and the Central Labor Council, virtually abandoning any oppositional role for the entire year 1968 in order to sell the merger idea to the membership as pie in the sky. The WL supporters broke from "Staff for Merger" to form the "Affiliation Now Caucus," characterizing Morgenstern and PL as "sellouts" because they advocated a merger date *ten days later* than the WL! Once the dirty work of merger was successful, however, they turned around after almost a year of alliance with Morgenstern and began shedding crocodile tears over the rotten contract they helped produce.

Their latest creation (in a long, seemingly endless series) is the "Committee for a New Leadership," which has an even more minimal, lowest-common-denominator "program." They oppose raising demands for unions to take action against the Viet Nam war, and fought against SSEU participation in recent anti-war marches, a position consistent with their idea of building a labor party faster by avoiding all issues that would antagonize anti-communist or racist white workers.

In a recent election of representatives from the Delegate Assembly to the Executive Committee, the so-called Committee for a New Leadership refused voting support to a Militant Caucus nominee, by their abstention allowing a leadership flunkie to win the election by a narrow margin.

PL-Morgenstern Coalition

As for Progressive Labor, they spear-headed the merger drive by whitewashing the bureaucratic terms and DC 37's rotten history, and continue as Morgenstern's activist-henchmen as part of their policy of the "left-center coalition." On every key policy they have voted with the Morgenstern leadership against attempts by Militant Caucus supporters and others to oppose the contract and reorganization and pre-

pare the union for a struggle. After several local centers had passed motions to censure Morgenstern for bureaucratically adjourning a membership meeting, and brought this to the Executive Board, PL spokesmen prepared a counter-motion to "censure all those who criticized the leadership's policies at the January 27 membership meeting, for their disruptive tactics, slander of the officers and for threatening city-wide unity of staff" (re-merger). The motion warned that "other measures shall be taken if this divisive conduct does not cease." Thus, any organized oppositional caucus is liable to suppression, and with the endorsement of Progressive Labor!

PL supporters, who explicitly oppose building caucuses around radical trade union demands, have instead been instrumental in setting up something called "the Worker-Client Alliance" whose "program" consists of do-gooder positions on budget cuts, etc. and operates with the semi-official endorsement of the Morgenstern leadership. Apparently PL is a group whose trade union section doesn't know what its student section is doing. Or as Milt Rosen put it in March 1968 at the PL convention: "More significant adjustments are needed in our trade union program. It was here that we had the least experience, and it was here that the revisionist influence was strongest."

Black Caucus

The SSEU Black Caucus did a complete flip in the six months between the two votes on merger. In June 1968 they declared, "Black Caucus Against Merger," and sharply and accurately criticized the sellout history and current practice of Local 371, DC 37 and Victor Gotbaum, as well as the debilitating merger terms themselves. In January 1969, however, they issued, "SSEU Black Caucus Endorses Merger." Why? According to their leaflet, having had separate discussions with Gotbaum, they were assured a continuing role as a pressure group within the merged local, and decided to support merger since "being part of a larger organization will enable the Black Caucus to effectively organize a greater number of black people. . . ."

As a pressure group without any cohesive program except "to insure black representation on all levels of power," they supported the pro-merger Morgenstern slate in 1968 in return for being given three of the seven slots. If the Black Caucus were really interested in fighting for the needs of Black workers in welfare it would have fought the present contract, with its slave wages to Case Aides and basic low wage pattern for predominantly Black titles like Homemaker, Home Aide, Children's Counselor, etc., and would have demanded that the SSEU fight to extend to these workers the salary gains of caseworkers.

Militant Caucus

Following the actual consummation of merger, many of those who voted for affiliation are rapidly discovering that they have lost their decision-making rights and have a greater need than ever in the bureaucratic swamp of DC 37 for a principled and militant alternative to Morgenstern. Internal struggle—although now more difficult—must continue, and under the leadership of those who have proven themselves capable as consistent militants.

In this respect, the role played since 1966 by the SSEU Members for a Militant Caucus is exemplary. The attack on welfare workers is only the easiest target in what is becoming a general assault on all organized workers. Labor fakers like Gotbaum shudder at the prospect of angry ranks from below upsetting their detente with the City. For example, together with Albert Shanker of the UFT, Gotbaum on 19 December 1968 called for a local version of the Taft-Hartley Law, specifying a mandatory cooling-off period to prevent strikes by public employees. In a *New York Times* article the same day, Gotbaum suggested that union leaders needed to "take a tougher stand" to members who rejected accords that the leadership had reached with the bosses.

Welfare staff and New York workers in general must begin to *fight back* around a program of: 1) building militant union caucuses to organize workers against the labor bureaucracy; 2) city-wide strike actions, including the use of the general strike to protect labor from the onslaughts of government and the Viet Nam war; 3) independent labor political action to break from the ruling-class parties; build a labor-based party and begin by putting forward a labor candidate against the union-busters; 4) the fight for a workers government!

Within the SSEU, the delegates and members must separate friends from enemies, genuine militants from left-fakers. Out of the present struggles to end the workload overload, rank and file militants must begin to build through the Militant Caucus to sweep out the bankrupt Morgenstern leadership. ■

SUBSCRIBE TO THE SPARTACIST

Box 1377, G.P.O.
New York, N. Y. 10001
twelve issues — \$1
six issues — 50¢
three issues — free

Name _____
Address _____
City _____

SSEU'S FINAL SELLOUT

Death of a Union

The Social Service Employees Union (SSEU) was formed in 1962 as a break-away from the company-union Local 371 of District Council 37, American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees. The SSEU was for several years the most militant public employee union in the country, representing over 10,000 welfare workers of various titles in the New York City welfare department. However, the union's last contract virtually wiped out every major gain won through strikes and work actions since its first contract in 1965; the independent SSEU itself has been liquidated in a recently consummated bureaucratic re-merger with Local 371; finally, the leadership has meekly acquiesced to the dissolution of a majority of the union's own membership base through the City's policy of "planned attrition" of the caseworker title! This voluntary self-removal of the SSEU as a militant catalyst among New York public employee unions is the final product of a policy—begun under former President Judith Mage and continued with more calculation under Martin Morgenstern—of capitulation and retreat before the City's drive against public workers.

Having campaigned for office on a single-issue platform of re-merger with 371, the victorious Morgenstern leadership, including a majority of the union's Executive Board, entered collective bargaining in October 1968. They had no intention of preparing the SSEU membership for a fight for a decent contract; they were simply conducting a holding action, awaiting a new vote on merger, having failed to pull it off in June 1968.

"No Contest" Policy

Their collective bargaining attitude was indicated as early as October 1968 when Morgenstern declared to the delegates, "A strike is an action we must avoid at all costs." This statement was codified as official SSEU policy on 7 November when the officers and a pro-merger majority of the delegates voted to "go before the Office of Collective Bargaining (OCB)," with the union's demands, defeating a counter-motion to oppose OCB made by Militant Caucus spokesmen. Under the terms of the NYC Collective Bargaining Law (the joint creature of the City and DC 37's Victor Gotbaum) the OCB "shall have the power and duty . . . to make a final determination as to whether a matter is

within the scope of collective bargaining. . . ." The OCB structure provides for an *entirely* legalistic framework for contract negotiations, with binding arbitration, and requires the filing of a no-strike pledge. Furthermore, it restricts the unions to bargaining only on the "impact" of new City policies or procedures. In other words, the City does whatever it wants. Since the total of nine weeks of strikes in 1967 had been essentially over opposition to OCB criteria, this decision represented a major capitulation by the SSEU.

Set-Up for Merger

The most important issue of the new contract was the City's announced intention to reorganize the welfare system, replacing the higher-paid titles of caseworker and supervisor in large part with lower-paid clerical and Case Aide titles, thus reducing the total wage bill. While the broad outlines of this plan had been known to the union officers as far back as July 1968 (when a Re-Structuring Committee had been formed), the union leadership played dumb before its rank and file, claiming they hadn't been told anything "officially." The first time most of the workers heard of reorganization was a closed-circuit

TV broadcast by welfare Commissioner Goldberg on 6 December 1968, only 25 days before the expiration of the old contract. Goldberg projected a 75 percent reduction of caseworker staff over a period of 18 months. The SSEU leadership's response to Goldberg's declaration of war on the caseworkers? The *SSEU News* of 27 December 1968 carried a notice without comment: "The last scheduled exam for the job of Caseworker will be Jan. 7. Since the Department is planning to cut down staff size through attrition, it is unlikely that another exam will be held for some time." This policy of silence on the reorganization and behind-the-scenes maneuvering was deliberately intended to induce a mood of fatalism and panic into the union membership which would make the appeal for "unity of staff" through re-merging with Local 371 look much more attractive. The merger re-vote was eventually scheduled for 10 January 1969.

After a barrage of pro-merger leaflets filled with lies, half-truths and exaggerations promising a "strengthened bargaining position" through "unity of staff" the merger was approved by 78.9

(Continued on Page 6)



STUDENT-WORKER SOLIDARITY. Hundreds of Tallahassee campus militants, including Spartacist supporters and other SDSers, march to support desperately underpaid striking Black workers in the city's largest factory. State-wide press coverage was heavy and hostile, reinforcing combined police-management repression against workers, students in a race-baiting, violent strikebreaking attempt.