

The Maoist Canadian Party of Labour

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The Canadian Party of Labour [CPL] is a small Maoist group with forces in Toronto and one or two other southern Ontario cities. Its roots lie in a split within the original Maoist organization, the Progressive Workers Movement [PWM].

The key political issue in the split was Vietnam. For most of 1968 the Vancouver and Toronto PWM had an orientation to organizing actions "in support of the National Liberation Front." In Toronto on October 26, 1968, the "Canadians for the NLF" organized a small sectarian action counter to the mass march organized that day by the Vietnam Mobilization Committee.

These CNLF "militants" viciously slandered the mass VMC march and abused the name of the NLF by attempting to use it to pull people out of the VMC march to their own, which they claimed was the only true anti-imperialist action. The only alternative they posed to the VMC's popu-

lar anti-imperialist action for the immediate withdrawal of U. S. troops and an end to Canadian complicity was juvenile and ultraleft flag-waving and "Down with U. S. Imperialism" sloganeering.

Only one month after they organized this sectarian action these Maoists had executed a 180-degree turn and had taken up the slanderous cry of PL [Progressive Labor] in the United States that the North Vietnam and NLF leaderships were clearly revisionist and were in the process of liquidating the Vietnamese struggle through the Paris peace talks. The fact that there is no evidence that the Paris talks have in any way weakened the Vietnamese people's resolution to fight till final victory did not bother these Maoist sectarians.

Because the Vancouver-based PWM refused to adapt to this new line the Toronto Maoists broke with them to form CPL. They dropped out of the antiwar movement and since then their only contact with it has been when they have shown up to distribute leaflets "exposing" the Vietnamese leadership.

When NLF representatives visited Canada in late 1968 to address antiwar audiences, the Maoists, far from expressing solidarity with these visiting revolutionaries, viciously attacked them for participating in the Paris talks and for associating with the unionists, Communist Party members, Trotskyists and pacifists who organized the meeting.

In its early period, CPL proclaimed that the basic fact about Canada was that it was a colony of the United States and that all institutions, including its major unions, were controlled by U. S. imperialism. Therefore a focus of CPL's activity on the trade-union level became the promotion of Canadian national unions and unbridled hostility to the international unions affiliated to the Canadian Labor Congress which were, according to CPL, "Yankee loyalists," the "agents of U. S. policies," selling out their Canadian members to the "'big boss' — U. S. imperialism."

A typical example of this absurd orientation was their action at a Continental Can plant in Toronto in February 1969, where they mobilized all their members to dominate a strike of 20 members of a small Canadian national split-off from the craft International Operating Engineers Union. They attempted to take over the leadership of this strike to use it as a weapon against the major union in the plant, the Pulp-Sulphite union, which happened to be an international.

Pulp-Sulphite unionists who supported the strike were denounced as scabs when they failed to shut the whole plant down, or, failing that, to lose their jobs by refusing to cross the picket line.

Dan Heap, one of the Pulp-Sulphite unionists most active in supporting the strike, was singled out for extreme vilification as a scab and a "phony leftist." CPL twisted the fact that Heap was an NDP [New Democratic party — Canada's labor party] candidate in the last federal election to try to "prove" that the NDP was just another antiwork-class party.

Meanwhile CPL's American comrades in PL had gone to the other extreme and developed the position that all national struggles were, by themselves, reactionary. CPL "self-criticized," changed its definition of Canada from that of a "colony" to that of a "dependent capitalist state," and

declared both Canadian and Quebec nationalism to be reactionary.

According to these red Trudeaus: "The separation of Quebec would divide the workers of Canada into two and draw Quebec workers nearer to the bourgeoisie (the one which speaks French). *We must fight nationalism.*" The Quebec unilingual movement was denounced as "pro-capitalist" and its leader, Raymond Lemieux, accused of seeking a high post in a French Canadian capitalist firm.

On the campus CPL's record is no better. Here their strategy has been to set up groups pretentiously called the Worker-Student Alliance. Soon after the WSA set up shop at the University of Toronto last year the campus was hit by a big struggle against an administration which had announced its intention to suppress dissent on campus. All the WSA could do was to tell the students that the struggle was useless and that if the university wanted to suppress students nothing could stop them.

We want no "precipitate action at this time," said the WSA. "Only through patient long-term organizing (at this stage, primarily in the classroom) can a student movement be built which is strong enough to contest the authority of the university successfully."

Rather than fight student struggles, the WSA has been more concerned with students winning workers' strikes for them. This approach proved to be a brilliant failure at the University of Toronto last month. About 50 unorganized cafeteria workers went on strike because the university had refused to guarantee their jobs when the company running the cafeteria was replaced by another company. The CPL brought all its forces onto the U of T, forced its student members onto the negotiating team, and vilified other student and labor organizations that wanted to aid the workers.

The strike took place in the midst of an organizing drive on campus by the Canadian Union of Public Employees, but the WSA's response to CUPE's offer of assistance to the strikers was one of hostility.

The Young Socialists, who distributed thousands of leaflets urging student support for the strike, were heckled by the WSAers when they made the case for CUPE being involved in the strike. YSers who attempted to cut across WSA's ultraleftism were manhandled by the Maoists, who continue the criminal Stalinist tradition of threatening and using violence against opponents on the left.

By effectively preventing CUPE from being represented on the negotiating team, and leading the strike to defeat, WSA dealt a heavy blow to CUPE's attempt to organize campus workers.

In the trade-union arena, CPL has a consistent strategy of organizing picket-line mobilizations for selected strikes, preferably small strikes which they have a chance of taking over. Although CPL nominally supports unions, its activities actually undermine, rather than complement, the existing unions.

The record of the Canadian Party of Labour, like that of the Progressive Workers Movement, is vivid testimony to the disorienting effect of Maoism as a political tendency.

CPL's ultraleft adventures flow from its blind adherence to the ruling ideology of the Chinese bureaucracy or its U. S. interpreters, as a substitute for a class analysis of the living reality of the Canadian labor movement.