

CHAPTER IV
**When radical reformism replaces
a revolutionary program**

The League was founded at a time when little progress had been made in the struggle against revisionism on the questions of program. Its **Statement of Political Agreement**, which appeared in November 1975, won some credibility at the time by recognizing — superficially, at least — the totally erroneous nature of the economist line defended by its founding groups. This economist line had been criticized in particular by IN STRUGGLE!. The **Statement** went on to recognize that the struggle to rebuild the revolutionary proletarian party was the central task for Marxist-Leninists and that in their work they had to give priority to communist propaganda and agitation, and in particular political agitation. No doubt to make this sudden reversal of its position a bit easier to swallow, the League filled its founding document with an impressive collection of promises. It promised to make the development of a correct political line and a political program a priority. It promised to demarcate from revisionism and take up the struggle for the unity of Marxist-Leninists on the basis of a principled, ideological struggle. It promised to rally class-conscious workers on an explicitly communist basis: *“Only the widespread agitation and propaganda of communist ideas in the working class will make this (rallying — Ed. note) possible” (1)*. Although it was very careful not to admit it explicitly, the League apparently recognized the correctness of the main objectives that the Group IN STRUGGLE! had already been defending for a long time.

Workers’ committees get a new name: factory cells

Nonetheless, a few things were missing in this “new” line put forward by the old economist groups. As was pointed out in Chapter 1, these tasks were not primarily presented as the tasks of the Canadian communist movement as a whole. Instead, they were seen as the organizational tasks of one group, the League. This group’s “factory cells” were to be the basis of the party that the League would build. In the situation that prevailed in 1975, this meant that the League had to all intents and purposes decided to totally ignore the struggle to unite Marxist-Leninists in a single organization able to carry the struggle for the party to a higher level. The League’s pretentiousness in rushing to

create factory cells, the basis of the future party, right away left the door wide open, in practice, for the revival of the whole economist line.

According to the old economists, a preliminary stage of economic struggles was necessary before trying to rally workers to communism. To put it briefly, you had to be recognized as a "good trade unionist" and have lots of "buddies" among the workers before beginning to do communist work. Meanwhile, the leadership provided by these economists amounted to calls for "Rank and file unity in action", "Militant trade unionism", etc. In Canada, the notorious theory of implantation has repeatedly proven to be the foundation of the opportunist tactics that worship the defensive economic struggle and scorn revolutionary political struggle.

The argument goes something like this. There are not very many communist workers; or, to put it more exactly, since the degeneration of the Communist Party of Canada, Canadian workers have been dominated by bourgeois nationalism and the social-democratic ideology of class collaboration. So the economists argue that the first step in rallying workers to communism is to be recognized as someone who plays a combative role in economic struggles. This means that it is necessary to send large numbers of militants into factories to wage economic struggles and use this as a basis to gather the most combative workers together in some kind of workers' committee that can then serve as a stepping-stone to take over leadership of the union. Once they have gained acceptance as good, solid buddies, these closet communists can then start explaining the "advantages" of a socialist society to "their" workers.

This opportunist viewpoint leads to secondarizing the revolutionary political struggle. It also leads to reformism. The revolutionary program is watered down to a vague, general promise of some idealistic kind of socialism, seen mainly as a series of economic advantages. This economist line also leads to rallying workers in an opportunistic way, on the basis of short-term struggles and a program of strictly short-term demands alone, instead of on the basis of a communist program rigorously demarcated from revisionism and bourgeois nationalism.

The League claimed to criticize this economism, which is in fact simply a revisionist position on party-building. Nevertheless, it maintained a very sympathetic attitude towards implantation as a tactic, even if it criticized certain "excesses".

"Our organization must develop primarily in the working class, in the large factories where the workers are concentrated. The factories will become the fortresses of the League (and later of the Marxist-Leninist communist party). To this end, we must send Marxist-Leninist militants into the plants to do communist

agitation-propaganda and organizational work; the virtual absence of communist workers in Canada makes such measures necessary." (2)

Under certain circumstances, it may indeed be useful to send militants into factories to support and extend communist agitation and propaganda work from within. The **Statement of Political Agreement**, however, repeatedly stressed implantation as a tactic, even going so far as to suggest that it was an obligatory tactic. It soon became obvious that behind the new sentences and the insistence lay the same old economist point of view.

When it was founded, the League affirmed that its fortresses were to be factory cells, and less than a year later we learned that the League's structure was based on factory cells. At the same time, — indeed, in practically the same breath — it also asserted that there were hardly any communist workers in Canada. So who do the League's "factory cells" include? Well, it would seem that they are mainly made up of the "workers" implanted by the League. In short, they are not much different from the old economist groups, except that the definition of "implanted militants" now includes the words agitation and propaganda. And as we will see further on, the meaning of these words in practice does not amount to anything more than the work done by the old economist groups. But the former workers' committees are now called "factory cells", and the group of "factory cells" is called the "Marxist-Leninist" organization soon to become the "Marxist-Leninist party". That is how economism keeps itself up-to-date.

Another aspect that merits our attention is the way in which the organizational form and objective outweigh political content.

"Under current conditions, it is important to send some militants of the organization into the factory in order to promote, by their work of agitation and propaganda, by their direct participation in struggles, the creation of factory cells." (3)

It is true that factory cells must be the organizational basis of the party and the preferred structure into which communist workers should be regrouped. But how can they be grouped together in this way — how can this form be the principal form of organization — before a significant contingent of communist workers, workers rallied on the basis of the **communist program**, has been developed? The question itself indicates the answer. To create its phoney "factory cells", the League has had to disguise its petty-bourgeois militants as workers and do a rush job of rallying workers on the sole basis of short-term demands and the League's slide shows about the economic merits and benefits of socialism.

Certain political conditions must be fulfilled before genuine, working-class communist factory cells can exist. For instance, the **communist program** must have really made some headway among the masses, and a significant number of workers in a significant number of factories must have rallied to **this** program. At the present time, these political conditions do not exist, except perhaps on a very limited scale. So why does the League put such emphasis on its “*factory cells*”? Because the main purpose of these so-called cells is precisely to take up where yesterday’s economists left off. They want to be recognized as “combative workers” in economic struggles, but at the same time keep political ideas to themselves for the most part. Political discussion is reserved for the chosen few, who are cut off from all debate and granted the “privilege” of becoming acquainted with the League’s bourgeois nationalist line.

That is a rough but not inaccurate outline of what the League’s interventions in workplaces really amounts to in practice. Having to all intents and purposes abandoned the communist agitation and propaganda that presents the **independent** point of view of the proletariat on all political questions, the League talks about the “party for co-ordinating class struggle” in its official propaganda, and dangles the various economic benefits of socialism as if they were election promises.

Indeed, conjuring up idyllic visions of socialism is part and parcel of economism’s and reformism’s “new image”. No article or leaflet produced by the League is complete without a pitch for the advantages of “socialism-like-in-China”. Lots of people in Canada are singing the praises of socialism these days. Everyone, from the Trotskyists to the old CP to the left-wing Christians, tries to sell his program by promising a socialist society in which there will be no unemployment, no housing crisis, no inflation, no industrial injuries. All of them, including the League, talk about socialism, but their vision of socialism is revisionist through and through.

Socialism is far more than a series of economic benefits. Socialism is above all a ceaseless class war in which the masses must be constantly and resolutely mobilized and politically aware and active. Those who do not support this conception of socialism today, those who restrict themselves to economic struggles alone, are socialist in words only; in practice they are reformist. They use socialism as a vague slogan to justify a basically bourgeois political line.

The League’s attitude towards the Chinese Communist Party’s revisionist positions says a lot about the kind of socialism it invokes to give its economism a left-wing halo. In November 1975, the League undertook to serve as a mouthpiece for the Chinese leader Teng Hsiao-

ping and his “three worlds theory”. In March 1976, it applauded the dismissal of Teng Hsiao-ping and pretended to support the struggle against the right deviationist tendency. Simultaneously, however, in the very same issue of **The Forge**, it came out in favour of a stronger Canadian army. And then in March 1977, it turned around and joined in the slogans of “Down with the Gang of Four” and “Long live Teng Hsiao-ping”, without a single line of explanation or self-criticism.

Socialism would seem to be one of the League’s favourite words, and is used extensively in its attempt to polish up its “revolutionary” image. But there is good reason to think that the League really knows nothing about socialism and plenty about blatantly opportunistic tailism.

A manifesto to co-ordinate class struggles...

The League’s pamphlet, **Fight the capitalist crisis: Fight class against class for our demands and struggle for socialism!**, came, one could say, in response to IN STRUGGLE!’s **Manifesto against Bill C-73 and Wage Controls**, which was a manifesto of political agitation. **Fight the capitalist crisis...** sets out the basic orientation underlying the League’s work in the working-class movement, and gives a good idea of just what kind of leadership the League proposes to give it.

As long as it was in force, the Wage Control Act was the key aspect of the Canadian bourgeoisie’s attack against the working class. Its purpose was to cut wages and so strengthen the Canadian monopoly bourgeoisie and its ability to compete with other imperialist bourgeoisies around the world. But it was also a direct political attack on the working class and its trade-union organizations. By attacking workers over their right to free collective bargaining, the Canadian bourgeoisie attacked the main base of working-class mobilization and thus opened the way for further attacks against the proletariat on all fronts, and in particular the question of democratic freedoms. Reformist and sold-out union leaders did their best to prevent mass working-class mobilization against the bourgeois State and the capitalists’ political attack, precisely because they were afraid that the working class might in fact begin political struggle against the capitalist class as a whole. In such a situation, it was the duty of authentic communists to call upon the proletariat to take up the political struggle — to engage in a united fightback for the repeal of the Wage Control Act and then go on to counter-attack.

The struggle for the repeal of this bourgeois law was an immediate and urgent priority. It was a way to weaken the Canadian bourgeoisie, the main enemy of the Canadian proletariat, and to develop the political consciousness of the proletariat on the basis of direct political action and the defence of the communist program in the heat of the

struggle. The tactical line proposed by IN STRUGGLE! was a concrete, short-term application of a revolutionary strategy that gave precedence to the political struggle to weaken the bourgeoisie and the camp of imperialism and strengthen the proletariat and the camp of revolution — in short, the political struggle to prepare proletarian revolution.

The League's line, however, was and still is something entirely different. The League saw the Wage Control Act as simply another law on wages, and the struggle against wage controls as simple another economic struggle. Its "manifesto" was meant to oppose the political struggle against wage controls, the central struggle of the entire working class and the entire people. In place of the political struggle, the "manifesto" put forward a series of economic demands held together by general calls for "*Rank and file unity in action*" (4), and to "*Co-ordinate and unify struggles*" (5) all wrapped in a coating of criticism of reformists who do not wage a "*constant and determined struggle*". (6)

The pamphlet vaunts the merits of the League as a co-ordinator of class struggle, and devotes a few paragraphs to some ritual remarks about socialism. Then the League gets down to business and starts talking politics — bourgeois nationalist politics. It is worth looking carefully at what it says:

*"More and more often these days fighting workers confront not just their individual boss but also the **bourgeois state** which intervenes directly through special laws, injunctions, court rulings and police protection for the capitalists. That's how the economic battles of the working class assume a political nature, i.e. a confrontation with the entire bourgeois class represented by the state. For example, the millworkers' strike in Montreal is directed not only at the owners of the four flour mills but also at the state which has hit the strikers with wage roll backs (wage controls), with injunctions and fines. The strike therefore becomes political — a confrontation between the workers and the **entire capitalist class** through its representative the state."* (7)

It is certainly true that the circumstances of economic struggles lead workers to question the role of the State or rather, the role of government and, more specifically, the role of the party that forms the government. This is all the more true in the current context of an imperialist country caught in the throes of a crisis, where the bourgeois State is constantly obliged to bail out individual capitalists. Such a situation makes people very receptive to communist political agitation and is fertile ground for developing the political struggle of the proletariat and its

allies as a whole against the bourgeoisie and bourgeois power as a whole. Paradoxically, however, the same situation also provides the new economists with a new pretext for hindering or restricting the growth of political struggle. They start out by talking about how the State, the courts and the police intervene in the proletariat's economic struggles, and they wind up talking about the economic struggle which they have turned into... the political struggle.

The League's whole tactic is to "politicize economic struggles", to aggravate every fight for a collective agreement to the breaking-point to make it into an "exemplary struggle". The struggle then can and will elicit popular support, and by virtue of this support becomes a political struggle.

The League does not go so far as to deny the necessity of the party (as do the anarcho-sindicalists); but with tactics like this, it in practice reduces the communist party to a centre for co-ordinating and instigating economic struggles. By being active here and there in all the local unions, it improves its chances of replacing current union leaders in future leadership conventions. In the next chapter, we will look at how the League's concept of political struggle results in the most contemptible opportunism and, eventually, undemocratic behaviour and contempt for the masses. Ultimately, the end-result is anti-communism.

For instance, the Montreal millworkers were fighting against wage controls, and so the League equated their struggle with the political struggle as such against wage controls. This was obviously wrong. The millworkers' struggle was very important: it pointed out the path to follow to resist wage cutbacks, and its impact was felt all across the country after the attack by the bourgeoisie's hired killers. But their struggle was also living proof that although combativity and "*rank and file unity in action*" are very necessary, this alone is never enough to defeat the bourgeoisie and force it to repeal its damned law. The courageous struggle waged by the Montreal millworkers against the bourgeois State's wage rollbacks did not constitute the political struggle; on the contrary, it was a powerful and urgent call to the working class and oppressed masses as a whole to take up the political struggle. It was a call to use all means necessary, including the general strike, to force the bourgeoisie to repeal the law. This would have been a victory for the proletariat, not only in the immediate struggle but also in terms of its revolutionary consciousness, its determination to go beyond the defensive economic struggle to the political struggle and the attack on bourgeois power.

The League's vision of political struggle leads fundamentally to reformism and collaboration with the bourgeoisie. What might be cal-

led the political extension of the economic struggle results inevitably in trade-unionist politics, namely presenting governments with the economic demands of the working class and asking governments to meet them with legislation. At worst, a trade-unionist political struggle is waged by openly traitorous parties like the NDP, with its good friends the labour bosses. At best, the struggle is waged by relying on mass mobilization. But one way or another, a political struggle that is left to develop on its own can never lead to the overthrow of capitalism and the destruction, above and beyond the existing Parliament, of the bourgeois State itself. And yet, it is precisely this kind of reformist political struggle that the League advocates:

“Rank and file workers are choosing the correct orientation: struggle, class against class, direct action against the bosses... This trend must be developed: all workers, whether in the public or private sector, have everything to gain from uniting their actions... This united fightback must develop into a political struggle in which the working class confronts and pressures the capitalist class to withdraw the Trudeau measures... We have to get united and concentrate all the different struggles against the various aspects of the crisis measures into a single working class fight aimed not just against this or that boss but against the whole capitalist class and their state... We must develop this movement by demanding that our unions organize demonstrations, joint actions...” (8)

What’s that? After having boycotted the political fightback against the Wage Control Act, the League sees itself as the great defender of political struggle? Yes indeed, except that their politics are nothing other than radical trade-union politics, with only one difference from the labour bosses’ trade-union politics: a greater stress on mobilization. In terms of content, there are no fundamental differences. For instance, the “*struggle class against class*” boils down to “*direct action against the bosses*”, which corresponds to the spontaneous reflex of workers confronted with daily exploitation by the bosses. And the political expression of the working-class movement’s spontaneous consciousness consists in pooling the economic demands of each group of workers to present them to the government.

It is precisely this kind of trade-unionist political struggle that the League’s pamphlet calls on the working-class movement to take up. It lists various trade-union demands, and then suggests that unions organize joint actions so that “*workers (act) as a class to force the withdrawal of the Trudeau measures and to counter the capitalist offensive*” (*) (9). That is something no “good trade-unionist” would dis-

agree with, even if he has never heard of the communist program. A political struggle that consists in compiling a joint list of the main trade-union demands to present them to the government can in no way be considered “*the beginnings*” (10) of the revolutionary political struggle that calls upon the working class to struggle for political power, to struggle against the bourgeois State itself.

Of course, the revisionists will accuse us of being “leftists”, because we talk about proletarian revolution while they are still at the “stage” of economic struggle, the “stage” of the anti-monopoly struggle, the “stage” of the struggle against the superpowers — in short, the “stage” of reforms. But we hold that the communist program is not something to be put off until tomorrow; it is already on the agenda, today.

This does not mean that we call for insurrection at a time when we are still in a situation in which an immediate seizure of State power is not a real possibility. But it does mean that we must involve the proletariat in the political struggle on the basis of the most central demands, the demands most likely to weaken the power of the bourgeoisie and strengthen the revolutionary struggle of the proletariat. In contrast, “politicizing economic struggles” can only lead to social democracy, which is nothing other than the expression of the bourgeois political line in the working-class movement.

The revolutionary, socialist political struggle can only develop on the basis of socialist consciousness, namely Marxism-Leninism and the revolutionary program that is the application of this science to the conditions of a specific country. The role of genuine Marxist-Leninists in Canada is therefore to involve the working-class movement in the proletarian political struggle to overthrow the bourgeoisie. Concretely this means that it is not enough to worship spontaneous mass movements, nor is it enough to radicalize economic struggles in an outlook of reformist politics. Instead, the working-class movement must base itself on the communist program and take up the direct political struggle to make the State back down and then go on to counter-attack.

By blazing the path of revolutionary political struggle for the working class, we can build strong headquarters, a communist party that can lead us to final victory. This does not imply disregard or contempt for economic struggles; the very opposite — we should support them and build further support for them. But if the idea behind the support is reformist — that the movement is far more important than the ultimate goal — then the support is simply hypocrisy and even betrayal. And

(*) The measures referred to here are a series of economic measures decided upon by the government in the fall of 1978. They include cutbacks in social services, layoffs of civil servants and restrictions on unemployment insurance benefits.

despite the League's radical airs, it is this reformist path that it has adopted. All the League's energies are poured into containing the working-class struggle within the narrow limits of the economic struggle against the bosses, including the State as boss.

Sabotaging the political fightback against the Wage Control Act

The League's tactics are in utter conformity with its strategic line: class collaborationist tactics correspond to a strategy of class collaboration. Its orientation aims to radicalize and co-ordinate economic struggles, but in practice it does its best to avoid attacking the bourgeoisie head-on, avoid the development of revolutionary political struggle by the proletariat. Indeed, the League invoked this tactical line to condemn IN STRUGGLE!'s work to lead the working class to undertake a political fightback.

"IN STRUGGLE! would have us think that the Wage Control Act is 'at the heart of the bourgeoisie's attack on the working class and people'. It is just the opposite: as the crisis gets worse, the bourgeoisie attacks on several fronts at once to force us to pay for its crisis and to crush our resistance..."

"There is another question that needs to be answered: what is IS's concrete, practical involvement in the struggles of the working class and masses against the capitalist crisis? The millworkers have been fighting the Wage Control Act for seven months now; what has IS done to build support for their struggle?"

"Has it organized broad participation in the picket lines? Has it worked to build broad support? NO! All it has done is weep about the Robin Hood workers shot by the bosses' thugs. It is still proposing phoney struggle committees against wage controls at a time when thousands of people have already given concrete support to the millworkers' struggle..."

But what is the true role of communists? They must be in the front ranks of the class struggle. For instance, the League organized a support rally of 1600 people in support of the millworkers. It got signatures for a petition in which the Robin Hood workers put forward certain demands... set up support committees in Toronto and Thetford Mines, and organized financial support from across Canada.

It is concrete actions like these that develop the unity of the working class and show that communists are its best defenders...

We should refuse to participate in these phoney committees.

Instead, we should unite our forces in the struggle against the capitalist crisis and its effects.

Practically speaking, that means co-ordinating and uniting our struggles in the region. The welfare recipients fighting for a raise in their benefits must join together with others struggling against the rise in the cost of living, or for a universal network of daycare centres, or against the Ministry of Social Affairs' budget cut-backs at the Pointe St-Charles Community Clinic. It means uniting our fightback with the struggle of the millworkers against the Wage Control Act and capitalist repression.

Concretely, it means organizing and supporting picket lines, circulating petitions. This is the only way we can build the unity of the entire working class and popular masses to struggle against the capitalist crisis.

Fight the capitalist crisis: unify and co-ordinate all our struggles!

Struggle for our rights! Socialism is the only path forward!

Rally to the Communist League to build our party!" (11)

The League has produced a multitude of leaflets like that. We have chosen to quote this one at length because, besides being a "remarkable" example of economism, it also justifies it. First, though, it should be made clear that the accusation about how IN STRUGGLE! did nothing to support the Montreal millworkers' struggle is simply one more example of how the League spreads unfounded rumours to avoid political debate. IN STRUGGLE! worked in various ways to build mass support for this struggle. However, unlike the League, which behaves like any of the bourgeoisie's petty politicians might in claiming the "championship" for support for the masses, IN STRUGGLE! does not consider that the purpose of this work is to make political capital or to add another feather to the opportunists' cap. (On this point, see the letter written by a worker in British Columbia, "**We do not serve the interests of the proletariat by lying**", IN STRUGGLE!, no.99.)

IN STRUGGLE! does not, however, limit itself to a role as a support committee for economic struggles. IN STRUGGLE! assumes its responsibilities as a communist group, and this is what really frustrates the League. IN STRUGGLE! works first and foremost to bring the proletariat to take up the political struggle against the bourgeoisie. During the specific period in question, this meant mobilizing the working class and its allies in the political struggle against wage controls. This was, in the final analysis, the best form of support for the millworkers' struggle.

What the League's leaflet did was to use the fact that the bourgeoisie

attacks on several fronts simultaneously — a general remark that is always true — to argue that the political struggle against the bourgeoisie should be replaced by specific struggle in one neighbourhood in Montreal. As if workers needed the League to tell them that! *“Unite our forces in the struggle against the capitalist crisis and its effects”*: very original! What a program for action! It is open-ended enough to suit the purposes of everyone — even Trudeau, who is stuck with trying to offset the “effects” of the crisis and who wants to “unite the nation” around a program of national union of all classes to solve inflation and the crisis in Canada. As for the “revolutionary program” that the League puts forward for the Canadian proletariat, it can be summed up as support for picket lines and campaigns to get signatures for petitions. And a catchy slogan about our rights and socialism at the end of a leaflet does not do much to pad out the program.

Nor can these self-appointed defenders of the workers cover up their contempt for the political struggle with a simple call to rally to the League, the group that is going to forge “our party”... or rather, their revisionist party. Trudeau, the NDP, the old CP, the Trotskyists and the League all try to sell up the merits of their visions of a “just”, “socialist” or even “communist society”. Furthermore, they all ask us to trust and support them because they are our *“best defenders”*. It is an old familiar argument, and reflects the class outlook of petty bourgeois who are powerless but who want to impose their leadership in the masses. They hope that people will not realize how bourgeois their political line really is if they flaunt their workerist sympathies and intentions and work hard at being good trade unionists. They think that after a few sugary but innocuous remarks in favour of socialism they have defended a communist program, even though in practice they do their best to keep the working class in the rut of economic struggles. But that is no problem for these opportunists, because after having done “good work” in support of workers, and after having “proven” that they are their *“best defenders”*, these bourgeois go-getters and their “Marxist-Leninist” party will lead the masses to “socialism” as a shepherd leads lambs to the slaughter or a boss leads workers to an assembly line! However golden one’s intentions may be, a bourgeois political line is always a bourgeois political line; and no amount of window-dressing can change that basic fact.

Reformist illusions: “Jobs for all”

Demand the right to work! That is the League’s second call to action. We agree with the League that the right to work is a fundamental right for the entire population — including the capitalists, who seem to be

much too busy exploiting us to “have the time” to do some work themselves. Needless to say, when the proletariat holds power, everyone will truly have the right to work, including the former capitalists who will have been expropriated and who will have to work if they want to eat.

Yes, the right to work is a basic right, and it is one of the basic facts of life in socialist society. But the capitalists can never grant this right, because it is **incompatible** with the very nature of capitalism. Capitalism naturally and necessarily engenders unemployment — it can’t help but do so. Full employment, **relatively speaking**, can only be achieved in a few given countries at a few given periods — for instance, in time of war. And when it occurs, the bourgeoisie is so afraid of the consequences that it immediately resorts to a wage freeze to forestall the fall in profits that would otherwise be a virtual certainty, given the law of supply and demand. It is especially ridiculous to imagine than an individual capitalist can possibly respect his employees’ right to work. When a capitalist lays off workers, it is precisely because he is no longer able to make enough profits with them; and profits are a capitalist’s only purpose in life. The substantial rise in the number of bankruptcies in times of depression is no coincidence.

It is just as obvious that the workers are the ones who foot the bill when plants shut down. So it is entirely legitimate to demand that workers who are laid off or who want to work but are unable to do so, be paid normal wages by the capitalist class. One very important way of waging this struggle may be to oppose allowing a capitalist to close a factory after he has milked it for all it is worth. It is up to the capitalists to solve their own “problems”; the proletariat has better things to do... like overthrowing the capitalist class as a whole, for example. But it is also clear that the struggle for financial compensation for layoffs cannot be successful unless it is waged as a political confrontation with the bourgeoisie and its State. This was, in fact, the orientation the old Communist Party gave to the struggles waged by the proletariat in the 1930’s to obtain unemployment insurance.

Is this what the League puts forward? Look at what it says:

“Only direct struggle against the capitalists and worker solidarity can guarantee the success of fightbacks against factory shut-downs... To back up these demands, workers must be mobilized in battle, for direct action against the company... The class struggle position is fundamentally different (from that of the labour bureaucrats — Ed. note). It proposes the fightback to rally the greatest support possible from workers and the masses of people.” (12)

Economism and reformism are evidently as inseparable as Siamese twins. Besides cultivating illusions about the right to work under capitalism, the League makes categorical affirmations about how direct action against companies guarantees the success of struggles against shutdowns! Nevertheless, to be perfectly honest, the League does indeed try, and calls for “*political struggle*”.

*“Whether the shutdown is temporary or permanent the important point is to **widen the struggle**, and transform it into a **political struggle**. Workers must be made to understand that the enemy is not a single boss, but the whole capitalist class and the state that serves it. Therefore, the support of workers in the same region, sector, and in factories owned by the same company, etc. must be rallied...” (13)*

Of course, there’s “political struggle” and there’s political struggle... Any revisionist worth his salt knows you have to go about it step by step struggle by struggle, factory by factory. But the League goes beyond that: it even talks about “*political struggle*” on the regional level, involving support from other workers. So the League’s conception of “*political struggle*” amounts to building support for a specific struggle among workers in the same sector or region. Well, if that is what the League means by political struggle, some kind-hearted soul should go tell it that the Canadian working class has been organizing that kind of support and solidarity for over a hundred years now, and that it managed to do so all by itself, long before the League began to confide its paternal advice about the “correct line”.

A recent incident provides a good example of the utter reformism of the League’s tactical line on the problem of unemployment. A group totally controlled by the League circulated a petition in a neighbourhood in Montreal, demanding that “*the PQ create jobs for unemployed youth in the upkeep and landscaping of parks*” (14). The struggle against unemployment has given way to the struggle to create jobs, to ask the PQ (if it is not already in its election program) to imitate Trudeau’s make-work-and-social-peace projects by creating provincial “Opportunities For Youth” and “Canada at Work” projects and signing up young people to landscape parks.

In the same vein, the League’s “*fightback program*” (15) launches a vigorous call for full employment:

*“**JOBS FOR ALL: The workers’ movement must demand the creation of jobs. We can force the government to start public works programs... that answer some of the people’s needs.**” (16)*

The League reiterates the NDP’s program practically word by word,

and comes up with helpful suggestions on how the bourgeoisie can solve the crisis and apparently even create “**JOBS FOR ALL!**”!

But enough is enough. We are not about to dissect the League’s “manifesto” page by page. One last comment: the purpose of this “manifesto” is to provide the working class with “*the outlook... of class struggle* (17).

And don’t forget the “struggle for socialism”...

Revived and fortified by this outlook of class struggle, we can fearlessly strike out towards a conclusion while the League is still setting out its “tactics” of “*struggle class against class*”. As we have seen, this in practice boils down to the struggle factory by factory, co-ordinated through the rank and file for action.

To start with, “*Oppose class collaboration!*” (18)

“A great step forward in the struggle to overthrow capitalism will be made with the transformation of unions into unions in which the proletarian line, the class struggle line, dominates and which support the struggle for socialism led by the party.” (19)

We have already been able to get something of an idea of what the League’s “*class struggle*” was all about; now, it has come up with something new, called the “*struggle for socialism*”. This strikes us as a bit strange, because we were under the impression that communists thought that the “*struggle for socialism*” encompassed the **entire** struggle of the working class. If the proletarian line is really in command, then all working-class struggles, however partial they may be, help to weaken the bourgeoisie and bring us a step closer to socialism. A vision of unions that sees their role as limited to support for a new kind of struggle called the “*struggle for socialism*” also strikes us as rather strange.

But perhaps this is simply an “unfortunate” choice of words. Let’s take a look at the second of the League’s tactics: “*Rank and file unity in action*”.

*“The experience of the working class shows that only **direct action**, the mobilization and action of the workers against the bosses, whether slowdowns, walkouts, strikes or other forms of struggle or pressure tactics, can bring victory in short-term fights.” (20)*

So for the League, the term “short-term fights” only refers to the struggle against the bosses. But the political struggle also affects us in the short-term, and so it, too, is an immediate struggle. For instance, the political fightback against wage controls is a short-term struggle to force the bourgeoisie to give in on a specific point, and it is also a way of strengthening the struggle for socialism here and now. One is left with the impression that the League does its best to keep the working class busy with the short-term, defensive economic struggle, while the political struggle, the struggle for socialism, remains the prerogative of the League itself. It co-ordinates everything from the vantage point of its “three worlds theory”, bringing into play the positive and negative factors at the appropriate moments, just as a puppeteer plays with his marionettes.

And what does the League propose, apart from “*Rank and file unity in action*”? (21) To counter-attack, and concentrate our forces on the most important battlefield, the usual tactic in real wars? No, because the ladies and gentlemen from the League, who have so much to say about the inevitable war between the superpowers, don’t seem to realize that we are at war with the bourgeoisie. So it should come as no surprise to find that the third of the League’s tactics can be summed up in the trade-unionist appeal to “*Co-ordinate and unify struggles!*” (22)

Finally, the League tells us that we also have to “*educate workers politically*”, or in other words, to “*see these struggles in the perspective of the struggle class against class*” (23). It is a real pity that this way of seeing struggles is limited to a few paragraphs on page 29, because if the League had applied this perspective consistently in the first 28 pages of the manifesto instead of keeping it for the 29th, it would have perhaps realized that its manifesto is simply another economist profession of faith, albeit one that would make the old revisionists of the RCT green with jealousy. But then again, it is perhaps a hopeless cause, given the confusion the League falls back into three pages later, in the appendix. Here, the League finally gets around to talking about the political struggle, but the best it manages to come up with is a warmed-over version of bourgeois nationalism in the form of the “three worlds theory”, which presents Pinochet’s Chile as part of the revolutionary forces, along with the socialist countries and the international working class!

That is how the League unites economism and nationalism. It boycotted the struggle for the unity of Marxist-Leninists, which was a struggle to expose and discredit the very roots of revisionist positions in Canada and throughout the world; it liquidated all serious theoretical debate; it resolutely ignored the vital question of the political program — up until now, it has not even dared present a preliminary draft. And so now all the League has left to offer the Canadian working class is

“*Rank and file unity in action*” in isolated economic struggles, while it itself propagates a bourgeois nationalist political line that it claims to defend even better than the bourgeoisie.

It is more than clear that the League has absolutely no revolutionary alternative to offer the proletariat and oppressed masses in Canada. It has nothing more to offer than what the people have already learned in more than a hundred years of unity in defensive struggles, namely that unity and solidarity are a vital necessity. It has nothing more to offer than the same old refrain of nationalism, chauvinism and the defence of the nation that capitalist propaganda harps on day in and day out. The League has nothing to offer the working class except hollow illusions, pompous speechifying and some flashy window-dressing for an old product — a bourgeois political line.

The League would dearly like to pass itself off as the “real party”, and so it bends over backwards to give itself the impression that it exercises leadership, even usurping the communist leadership of working-class struggles. But an organization with a bourgeois line so obviously contrary to the fundamental interests of the working class cannot impose its leadership except through opportunism, conniving and working in cliques. In this respect, the old economists are worthy models for their descendants. For those who abandon all principled defence of the communist program, and those who try to make political capital by being “good trade unionists”, are the very ones who try to impose their leadership on the masses through anti-democratic behaviour and schemes. Moreover, if the “new” revisionists with the “correct line” hope to rival the current bourgeois leaders of the working-class movement, they will have to become more and more reformist. They will undoubtedly continue to deploy great red banners at demonstrations and meetings, but in practice they will learn to be much more “adaptable”, much more right-wing. And if the call to war and “national reconciliation” should be sounded in the near future, the League will be waiting in the antechamber of the bourgeois State, just as the old Communist Party did in the last world war. For the League is repeating, almost step by step, the history of the revisionist degeneration of the Communist Party of Canada.

(1) *Statement of political agreement.... op. cit., p. 65.*

(2) *Ibid., p. 68-69*

(3) *Ibid., p. 70*

(4) *Fight the capitalist crisis: Fight class against class for our demands and struggle for socialism!*, p. 27

(5) *Ibid., p. 28*

(6) *Ibid., p. 26*

(7) *Ibid., p. 4*

- (8) *Build a united fightback of the working class: Fight the Trudeau measures and the capitalists' attacks*, p. 13-14
- (9) *Ibid.*, p. 14
- (10) *Ibid.*, p. 14
- (11) Taken from a leaflet distributed by the League in a neighbourhood in Montreal
- (12) *Fight the capitalist crisis...*, p. 8-9, and caption, p. 9
- (13) *Ibid.*, p. 9
- (14) Leaflet, Sept. 1978
- (15) *The Forge*, Oct. 6, 1978, p. 9
- (16) *Ibid.*, p. 9
- (17) *Fight the capitalist crisis...*, p. 5
- (18) *Ibid.*, p. 26
- (19) *Ibid.*, p. 27
- (20) *Ibid.*, p. 27
- (21) *Ibid.*, p. 28
- (22) *Ibid.*, p. 28
- (23) *Ibid.*, p. 29