

Part III. Socialist Strategy and Tactics

Section 1. The conscious character of the movement for socialism

The working class is the main social force in the struggle to replace capitalism with socialism. In advanced capitalist countries such as Australia, wage workers are the main producers, and the working class is the largest class, constituting more than 80% of the population. The labour of wage workers is indispensable to the economic life of modern capitalism, and is the main source of capitalist profit.

The central place of wage workers in the productive process gives them the social power to overthrow capitalism. No other social class or group has the power to achieve this. This is not to underestimate the importance of anti-capitalist struggles by other social forces, as such struggles can offer a political lead to the working class. Nor should the concept of working-class struggle be narrowly defined. Working-class struggle often takes varied forms around a wide range of issues.

Because the system of private property is the source of its oppression, the working class can liberate itself only by abolishing this system and replacing it with a system based on social ownership of the means of production. This new system is the only one capable of doing away permanently with *all* of the abuses and injustices of capitalism.

Since the beginning of the 20th century all the necessary material conditions have existed within the imperialist countries and on a world scale for this social revolution. But the existence of the necessary material conditions is by itself insufficient. Unlike all previous social transformations, the socialist revolution demands conscious action by the working class and its allies. Socialism can only be achieved through the united action of millions of working men and women conscious of their social interests and the steps necessary to realise them.

The need for a revolutionary party

The principal task of earlier social revolutions was to sweep away outmoded relations of production and the superstructural institutions defending those relations, thus clearing the way for the already spontaneously developing new mode of production. Because the socialist revolution seeks to substitute socially planned economic development for the existing system of exploitation of the producers, the new system cannot develop spontaneously once capitalism is abolished. It requires the conscious restructuring of social relations to eradicate the division of society into classes.

The socialist revolution is the first process of fundamental social change in human history to be carried out by the lowest social class. Unlike the capitalist class, which carried out its social revolution after it had developed considerable economic power and had accumulated a large amount of managerial experience, the working class can only realise its potential economic power and gain managerial experience after it has overthrown the old social order. Moreover, the working class confronts a class enemy with a highly

centralised network of military, financial, and ideological forces at its disposal. All of this conditions the strategy, tactics and organisation of the working class in its struggle for power.

The main weapon of the working class in its fight against capitalism is the potentially immense power of its collective action. The working class is capable of spontaneously engaging in vast struggles around immediate objectives, and of reaching the level of class consciousness necessary to create mass organisations (trade unions, broad strike committees) suitable for waging these struggles. But such spontaneous action is insufficient to create the level of political consciousness, or to achieve the unity of action, required to overthrow capitalist rule and reorganise society along socialist lines.

Under capitalism, and for a considerable time after its overthrow, the working class is marked by a heterogeneous political consciousness stemming from the diversity of conditions under which its members live and the diversity of their experience in struggle. Moreover, the capitalist class deliberately fosters divisions within the working class and in society as a whole, granting privileges to some while systematically discriminating against others.

This heterogeneity of working-class consciousness tends to decline when workers are impelled to take united action against the capitalists. However, mass struggles inevitably ebb and flow. During periods of intense mass struggle, large numbers of people become receptive to socialist ideas. But these periods are relatively rare and short-lived. In times of relative social passivity, the working class is more easily dominated by ruling-class ideology.

For all of these reasons, the working class cannot as a whole or spontaneously acquire the political class-consciousness necessary to prepare and guide its struggle for socialism. For this, it is indispensable to develop a party uniting all who are struggling against the abuses and injustices of capitalism and who have developed a socialist consciousness and a commitment to carrying out revolutionary political activity irrespective of the conjunctural ebbs and flows of the mass movement.

The role and character of the revolutionary party

A mass revolutionary socialist party is the highest expression and the irreplaceable instrument, of working-class political consciousness. The revolutionary party provides leadership to the struggles of the working class, not only for better terms for the sale of labour power but for the abolition of the social system that gives the rich control over the entire well-being of working people. The revolutionary party defends and advances the interests of the working class, not merely in relation to a given group of employers, but in its relation to all classes in capitalist society and to the state.

In the absence of such a party, the valuable experiences of groups of militant and politically conscious workers and other fighters tend to be isolated and lost. The organisation of these most conscious activists into a revolutionary party permits the

centralisation and preservation of these experiences and their dissemination to broader layers.

In times of social and political passivity it is often difficult to build a mass revolutionary party, but during mass revolutionary upsurges, a small revolutionary party can grow rapidly in size and influence. By applying correct tactics in such a political crisis, the party can win mass influence and guide the workers' struggle for power to a successful conclusion.

After the overthrow of the old ruling powers, the revolutionary party is indispensable to providing leadership in the tasks of defending and constructing the new society.

A party capable of undertaking such colossal tasks cannot arise spontaneously or haphazardly. It must be built continuously, consistently and consciously. This requires the utmost consciousness in all aspects of party-building, from questions of theory and policy to details of daily work. It requires determined, systematic work aimed at winning influence in all sectors of the mass movement, and persistent attention to recruiting new members, training them to become professional revolutionary activists.

The revolutionary party must always maintain principled opposition to the rule of the capitalist class. It must wage a consistent struggle against all forms of capitalist ideology, immunising itself against the pressure of capitalist public opinion and other alien class influences. Above all, it must constantly seek opportunities to organise the broadest masses for effective anti-capitalist political action.

This overriding aim determines the organisational character of the revolutionary party. It must function as a politically homogeneous campaign party capable of setting realistic objectives and concentrating its resources with maximum effectiveness. The purpose of its deliberations and internal discussions is to arrive at decisions for collective action and systematic work.

To achieve this homogeneity and unity in action, the party must above all be democratic. It must guarantee the right to hold and argue for different policies and proposals for action within the party, the right to recall elected leaders, and the right to vote on admission of members.

Constant and active attention to all these matters is an essential part of the foundation of an organisation that is truly democratic, and in which majority rule is understood and accepted.

On this foundation, the party can develop common bonds between its members based on their mutual confidence, experience and loyalty to each other and the socialist ideas which unite them. From this common bond flows the discipline and commitment of the members to the party.

The organisational structure of the revolutionary party should combine democratic decision-making and centralised administration of the party's work, with lower units subordinate to higher units, beginning with its highest decision-making body — the national conference of elected local delegates. In public and in action, all members should abide by the decisions of the party.

If the party is to avoid the dangers of sectarian isolation, it is necessary to maintain the closest contact with the broad masses of the working people and all the progressive social struggles of the day. Through this daily involvement with the realities of the struggle the party's ideas are constantly modified and tested, and in this process the party makes judgments about appropriate organisational forms and its role in the existing political situation.

This is a vital process since all of the conditions for the creation of a mass revolutionary socialist party do not emerge at once. Yet, even in times of relatively low levels of political struggle, a start must be made in the political and organisational process of party-building. Relatively quiet periods can actually provide opportunities for important work to lay the basis for rapid growth in times of mass revolutionary struggle.

On the other hand, it is also important to avoid empty proclamations and exaggerations about the stage the party has reached. Such delusions can lead to organisational disasters and absurdities and a sectarian political and organisational outlook.

Ultimately, only a revolutionary socialist party that has deep roots in the working class, that is composed primarily of workers, and that enjoys the respect and confidence of the workers, can lead the oppressed and exploited masses in overthrowing the political and economic power of capital. The central aim of the Revolutionary Socialist Party is to build such a mass revolutionary socialist party in Australia.

The role of a socialist youth organisation

It is particularly among young workers and students that the revolutionary party can expect to recruit the best militants in the struggle for socialism. While often lacking experience in struggle, young workers and students are generally free from the demoralisation of past defeats. Only the fresh enthusiasm and aggressive spirit of youth can guarantee preliminary successes in the struggle and revitalise the best elements of the older generation.

Work among young people can be most effectively carried forward by a socialist youth organisation that is in political solidarity with the revolutionary socialist party but organisationally independent of it.

The independent socialist youth organisation can attract radicalising young people who are not yet ready to join a party, but who are willing and able to participate in a broad range of political actions together with the revolutionary party and its members. It can lead actions and take initiatives in its own name among young people. It can serve as a

valuable training and testing ground for potential members of the party, and make it easier for them to acquire the political and organisational experience and theoretical education required for consistent revolutionary activity. Membership of the independent youth organisation enables young socialists to decide their own policies, organise their own actions, and learn from their own experiences.

An independent socialist youth organisation also has many advantages for the revolutionary socialist party itself. It helps the party to avoid acting as a youth organisation and reducing its political maturity and theoretical understanding to the less demanding levels of an organisation agreeable to broad layers of young people.

The main tasks of socialist strategy and tactics

The strategic task of the revolutionary party is to unite and mobilise the working class and its potential allies in a struggle for power. The accomplishment of this task requires the solution of two central, interrelated, problems:

1. How to help the masses to cross the bridge from demands and forms of organisation that stem from their day-to-day struggles against capitalist exploitation and oppression to the level of political consciousness and action required to impose revolutionary socialist solutions.
2. How, in this process, to gather fresh forces and train the cadres who can build a mass revolutionary socialist party capable of leading millions of working people to victory.

Central to the solution of these problems is the party's ability to give clear and timely answers to the problems faced by the masses and, through their own experiences of struggle, draw them in the direction of a revolutionary struggle for power. In addressing this task, the following points should be borne in mind:

1. The sphere of economic struggle between workers and employers cannot alone provide the basis for the full development of working-class political consciousness. Such consciousness can only develop through activity on the entire terrain of the battlefield on which all oppressed classes and strata of capitalist society fight out their struggles with their class oppressors and with the capitalist state.
2. The working class cannot achieve genuine political class-consciousness unless it responds from a socialist viewpoint to all cases of oppression no matter what class or social group is affected. The development of genuine working-class political consciousness is not possible unless working people are politically equipped to analyse the intellectual and political life of all the social classes; unless they are able to apply in practice the historical-materialist approach to all aspects of the life and activity of all classes, strata and groups. Socialists therefore reject attempts to focus the attention, observation, and consciousness of the working class exclusively, or even mainly, upon itself and its economic struggle. The self-knowledge of the working class is indissolubly

bound up with a clear theoretical and practical understanding of the relationships between all classes, strata and groups, acquired through direct political experience.

3. To fully develop the political consciousness of the working class, the socialist party must conduct propaganda in relation to every manifestation of capitalist oppression, no matter what section of the population it affects. All struggles against oppression are capable of drawing the masses into political action and assisting the development of working-class political consciousness. However, while there is no predetermined hierarchy of issues that defines which issues struggles may spontaneously develop around, the party must prioritise propaganda and agitation around those issues that have the greatest social weight, that are central to advancing the ability of the working class to think socially and act politically.

4. The working people will reach socialist conclusions only when they are convinced by their own experience of the correctness of the party's policy. Which issues will impel the broad masses into struggle at any particular time will depend on the development of the crisis of Australian imperialism. To neglect struggles undertaken spontaneously by the working people is as mistaken as to restrict the party's activities exclusively to those matters.

5. Socialists seek to convince workers that the problems facing all of the oppressed and exploited are issues of direct concern to them, and that there can be no individual solutions to the many problems created by capitalism. The problems facing the masses can only be solved through collective anti-capitalist political action.

6. The party champions progressive demands, and supports progressive struggles, of all oppressed sections of the population, regardless of the origin and level of their action. While supporting these struggles, the party seeks also to explain the necessity of going beyond immediate demands and struggles to a generalised struggle against capitalist rule.

7. Recognising the pervasiveness of divisions in the working class fostered by capitalism, the party advocates unity based on support for the demands of the most oppressed sections of the working class. It seeks to present clear solutions to the problems faced by potential allies of the working class.

8. Socialists promote methods of struggle in which the working class, because of its numbers and economic role, is strongest. The most effective method of working-class struggle is direct mass action in the streets and workplaces against the capitalist class and its state power.

9. The party derives its demands from the objective needs of the working class and all of the oppressed, and seeks to formulate them in terms that are, as much as possible, understandable to working people at their existing level of consciousness and readiness for action. In putting forward such demands it is necessary to avoid both opportunist and sectarian errors. The former result from losing sight of the strategic objective, while the

latter result from ignoring the existing level of consciousness of the broader forces the party seeks to mobilise.

10. The party raises demands and proposes actions aimed at shifting the burden of the inequities and breakdowns of the capitalist system from the working people onto the capitalists and their state, where it properly belongs.

11. In the course of mass struggles, the party advances demands that relate to the immediate problems facing working people but which challenge the power of the capitalists to control the lives of working people and the wealth they create, and which point to the need for working people to take political power into their own hands. Through the struggle for such transitional demands, the working class can develop its understanding of the need to overthrow capitalist rule and the means of doing so.

12. Socialists do not limit themselves to the necessary struggle to defend existing democratic rights, but seek to carry the struggle for democracy into all spheres of social life, in particular into the sphere of economic organisation and the process of decision-making about the living conditions of the working class.

13. In conducting its work, the party must be clear in distinguishing between strategy and tactics, and between propaganda campaigns (the dissemination of many fundamental ideas), agitational campaigns (the dissemination of a few ideas, or even one key idea) and slogans for action — and when it is appropriate to employ them. Strategy is a long-range proposition requiring propagandistic approaches. Tactics deal with immediate aims and agitation leading to action. Propaganda work is directed at the most advanced elements, with the aim of raising their general political understanding. Agitation is directed at the broad masses, with the aim of preparing them for action. Slogans for action are aimed at calling the broadest masses into immediate action, into mass struggle.

14. The party's tactical proposals must be subordinate to and aimed at advancing its strategic aim of socialist revolution. The party must choose tactics that help to raise the class consciousness of the workers and their confidence in their ability to fight and win. In determining its tactical line, the party must take into account the existing political situation, the relationship of class forces, the masses' consciousness, militancy and preparedness for action, and the influence and strength of the party itself.

15. The revolutionary character of the imperialist era flows not from the possibility of revolutionary mass action at any given moment but from the historic impasse of capitalism and the rapid fluctuations in the political situation resulting from this impasse. In the context of the capitalist system's instability, and of growing dissatisfaction among the masses, the course of the class struggle can change abruptly. Because of this, the party must avoid routinism and display the utmost creativity and flexibility in its tactics while remaining firm in its strategic orientation.

Revolution and the struggle for reforms

The revolutionary overthrow of capitalism is the final outcome of a process of increasing working-class consciousness, self-confidence and unity in action. Propaganda and agitation alone cannot bring about the necessary transformation of mass consciousness. Direct experience of success in mass struggles is essential, and such mass struggles are most often struggles for reforms to improve the masses' immediate conditions of life.

The struggle for reforms does not automatically lead to the erroneous view that reforms alone can solve the problems facing working people under capitalism.

Reformism, including the reformism of many who regard themselves as socialists, is a result of limiting workers' struggles to demands that are compatible with the capitalist system and to relegating the struggle for socialism to the domain of abstract propaganda. This in turn leads to abstention from the fight against the influence of capitalist ideology within the working class, failure to educate the working class in the necessity to overthrow capitalism, and failure to promote mass struggles that challenge the political power of the capitalist ruling class.

Sometimes the reaction of socialists against the reformist allies of capital within the working-class movement leads to the development of ultraleftist currents, which falsely identify class treachery with the struggle for reforms, and therefore reject participation in any such struggles. Adoption of such a position would condemn the socialist party to sectarian isolation from the masses.

The ultraleftist view implies passive acceptance of deteriorating conditions of life for working people until a moment when they might suddenly and spontaneously become capable of overthrowing the capitalist system in one concerted attack. Such an attitude is utopian. It falsely assumes that working people, increasingly divided and demoralised by their inability to defend their standard of living and democratic rights, can instantaneously acquire the unity, self-confidence and political experience necessary to defeat the capitalist class.

Effective struggle for immediate reforms must be combined with defence of the long-term interests of the working class. Emphasis on the one to the exclusion of the other can lead either to opportunist or sectarian errors. Overemphasis on the struggle for immediate reforms leads to opportunist adaptation to the existing level of consciousness of the masses, that is, to capitalist ideology. Concentration on the long-term interests of the working class separated from its immediate needs leads to sectarianism, which cannot show the way to future revolutionary struggles because it is incapable of dealing with the masses' present struggles.

While supporting, and helping to lead, struggles for immediate reforms, the party rejects the reformist illusion that the fundamental problems facing the masses can be resolved by partial solutions, including those raised in transitional demands. The fundamental problems facing working people can be resolved only through the revolutionary seizure of power and reorganisation of the economy and society along socialist lines. The party places great importance on transitional demands because they relate to the immediate

problems facing the masses while being objectively linked, in the conditions for their fulfillment, to these socialist goals.

Forging working-class unity

In the interests of maintaining its social domination, the capitalist class fosters divisions within the working class by granting privileges to some workers and discriminating against others. The capitalists seek to pit male workers against female workers, white workers against non-white workers, Australian-born workers against migrant workers, the old against the young. By thus dividing the working class, the capitalists create a layer of superexploited workers. This weakens the fighting strength of the working class as a whole and inflicts a higher rate of exploitation on all workers, since wage scales are built from the bottom up.

The labour bureaucracy has been a willing accomplice in the bosses' divide-and-rule strategy. Basing itself on the relatively privileged workers, it has promoted the myth that a permanent strategy of class collaboration serves these workers' material interests, and that capitalism deserves their confidence and support. At the same time, in periods of capitalist economic crisis the labour bureaucracy's class-collaborationist policy leads it to cynically denounce struggles by the relatively privileged workers as a threat to the collective interests of the trade union movement.

Because they are often well-organised and consequently more confident, the relatively privileged workers will often go into battle more readily and more confidently than workers demoralised by years of low wages, bad working conditions, and little or no unionisation. The struggles of the relatively privileged workers can in turn serve as an inspiring example for the less privileged, less confident and less organised workers. For this reason, the party opposes any strategy that seeks to subordinate the struggles of the relatively privileged workers against the bosses to the labour bureaucracy's false concept of working-class unity, that is, collective capitulation to the bosses' austerity measures.

Instead, the party's strategy is based on the spontaneous tendency of the working class to defend its immediate material interests. Our strategy seeks to lead this defence in the direction of a generalised mobilisation that challenges the capitalists' economic and political power.

Central to such an anti-capitalist strategy is the development of working-class unity in action through defence of the interests of sections of the working class that suffer multiple discrimination — particularly women workers, migrant and non-white workers, and young workers.

Within the complex system of actions, methods, and interconnected demands required to forge working-class unity in action, the united-front tactic has particular importance. The united front provides a vehicle for mobilisation of the broadest masses in defence of their immediate interests even though broader agreement might not be possible.

While the party constantly seeks to publicise its general perspectives and policies, counterposing them to those of the supporters of capitalism, this alone is not enough to convince broad layers of working people that the party's policies are correct. Only experience in action can advance the consciousness of masses of working people. Action provides a practical test of policies and tactics. Therefore, the party does not make its proposals for establishing a united front conditional upon mass acceptance of its overall policies and general perspectives.

The party bases its united-front initiatives on the immediate needs of the masses in the objective situation. For that purpose the party advances specific demands that develop mass unity in action. The party stands for broad, militant, democratically organised, mass mobilisations in support of these demands.

To be effective, united fronts should be formed around clearly defined issues, should be founded on a democratic attitude towards discussion of the best means of pursuing the joint objective, and should involve respect for the right of all participants to continue expressing their views and to act on other questions.

Inherently, the united-front tactic involves seeking agreements with non-revolutionary political forces. Concessions in the interests of establishing and maintaining the united front should not undercut its central purpose — the mobilisation of the broadest possible forces against the policies of the capitalist class.

The united front is not an end in itself, but a means to unify and mobilise the masses, to draw them away from the influence of pro-capitalist leaders and to win them to the party's policies and revolutionary perspectives.

Socialists and the trade unions

The trade unions are the basic organisational vehicles for the workers' day-to-day defence of their economic interests against the capitalist class. Through trade-union organisation, workers seek to suppress competition between themselves as sellers of labour power, and so secure a higher price for this commodity.

The formation of trade unions reflects an elementary form of working-class consciousness — the recognition that the economic well-being of each wage-earner depends on collective action and solidarity. But in itself, this elementary form of class consciousness and organisation implies neither consciousness of the historic interests of the working class nor understanding of the need for independent political action to realise these historic interests.

A century and a half of experience has conclusively demonstrated that the unions alone, being mass organisations uniting workers with diverse levels of political consciousness, are incapable of preparing and organising the working class for revolutionary action. This task requires the building of a revolutionary socialist party.

Nevertheless, the organisation of workers into trade unions is a necessary stage on the working class's road to the socialist transformation of society. Trade unions are necessary for the day-to-day defence of the workers' interests against those of capital.

In the absence of strong trade unions, the employers win the vast majority of their daily battles over wages and working conditions, and this leads to a loss of self-confidence in the working class, undermining the foundations of consciousness and preparedness for struggle that are necessary for more radical anti-capitalist action.

Moreover, in the era of monopoly capitalism, trade-union activity cannot defend workers' economic interests by confining itself to the fight for better wages and reduction of the working day. Workers are faced with national economic problems affecting their living standard: inflation, taxation, cuts in social spending, permanent unemployment, as well as all the other social and political issues of the day, which include the destruction of the environment, attacks on democratic rights, etc.

The trade unions are driven inevitably to take positions on all these issues, and as a result they are potentially a school for the education of the working class on a range of important political questions relating to the division of national income and questions of investment at the level of the national economy. Because of these and other factors, it is important that socialists conduct systematic work in the trade unions.

The party's activity in the unions is designed to maximise their effectiveness as instruments of struggle for the defence of the immediate interests of the workers, and in the course of such struggles to win the workers to a socialist perspective. The main obstacle to this aim is the domination of the unions by a thin layer of officials who place defence of their relatively privileged positions ahead of the interests, both immediate and longer-term, of the mass of workers.

The union bureaucracy, which enjoys social privileges not available to ordinary workers, shares the socio-political outlook of the petty bourgeoisie. It values, above all, social peace and class collaboration. It objectively weakens the unions, transforming them from organisations for the defence of their members' interests into secondary instruments of the capitalist state, charged mainly with the task of subduing and disciplining the workers. One result of this is greater susceptibility to anti-union propaganda among the less politically conscious workers.

The party seeks to strengthen the unions by promoting trade-union democracy, labour unity and class independence.

Trade-union democracy is essential to the mobilisation of the full power of the workers against the employers. At the very least, trade-union democracy involves the right of the union ranks to freely determine the union's goals and policy, and to elect and recall the union's leaders. The essential foundation of such democracy must be day-to-day involvement of the entire membership in the union's activities, particularly at workplace level.

The demand for trade-union democracy conflicts with the interests of the union bureaucracy. In its pursuit of social peace and conciliation with the employers, the bureaucracy inevitably rides roughshod over the concerns and interests of the unions' ranks. The party's propaganda and agitation concerning questions of union democracy should therefore be closely linked to the fight against the class-collaborationism of the union bureaucracy, which is the basic source of its anti-democratic methods.

Recognition of the elementary need for working-class unity is the bedrock of trade-union organisation. The party supports a number of steps to strengthen trade-union unity. These include:

- Campaigning for unionisation of unorganised workers.
- Extending solidarity to all workers in struggle.
- Breaking down narrow craft divisions and promoting democratic amalgamation into unions that embrace all workers in a given branch of industry.
- Promoting full participation in the life of the unions by specially oppressed groups of workers, such as women, migrants, the young and the unemployed. The party supports the right of these specially oppressed workers to organise their own caucuses inside the unions and to develop their specific demands. At the same time, the party opposes attempts by the union bureaucracy to isolate specially oppressed groups in powerless token organisations cut off from the regular union bodies.

While the party stands for the greatest possible degree of trade-union unity, it also recognises that the trade-union bureaucracy attempts to enforce unity around reactionary projects in the service of its class-collaborationist perspectives. Such cynical, demagogic appeals to unity must be resolutely opposed.

The trade unions cannot effectively defend their members' interests unless they are independent of the employers, capitalist parties and the capitalist state. Genuine independence of the trade unions requires:

- Opposition to all attempts to integrate the unions into the management structures of capitalist firms under the cover of projects bearing names such as "worker participation" or "industrial democracy." In a capitalist economy, such projects inevitably result in workers being forced to take responsibility for the profitability of the company, while holding no real power in management. Such projects divert the unions from their basic task of defending workers' jobs, wages and working conditions. They are used to divide and confuse the workers and to weaken their class organisation in the face of the employers' attacks.
- Opposition to the affiliation of unions to the liberal-capitalist Labor Party. The unions' ability to defend their members' interests is seriously weakened by these organisational links, which are used by the union bureaucracy to promote the view that the ALP is the political arm of the labour movement. This false view is in turn used to justify the subordination of workers' struggles to the pro-capitalist policies of the ALP.

- Opposition to control of the unions by institutions of the capitalist state. The Australian union movement has long been subordinated to the capitalist state through the system of compulsory arbitration and industrial courts. This subordination has been actively supported by the reformist trade-union officialdom, which peddles the liberal illusion that these capitalist institutions are socially neutral and can be used by the workers to advance their interests. The struggle to free the unions from the control of the capitalist state is thus inseparable from the struggle against the class-collaborationism of the union bureaucracy.

While fighting for trade-union independence from the capitalist state and all capitalist parties, socialists reject the view that the unions can effectively defend the workers' objective interests while maintaining an attitude of indifference towards politics and the question of which class holds state power.

The capitalist class has always sought to convince workers that they should concern themselves with economic questions only, and should not involve themselves in politics. The capitalists are well aware that no serious danger will threaten their rule while they manage to confine the working class within the narrow limits of economistic trade unionism. Indifference to politics really means passive acceptance of capitalist politics. This is why the capitalist class encourages such indifference among workers.

The employers' use of state power to weaken and defeat the unions' industrial struggles eventually impels the workers to recognise the need for political action. To prevent this impulse developing in a socialist political direction, the capitalist class promotes the view that political action should be restricted to seeking legislative reforms. This idea is readily accepted by the reformist union bureaucracy, which limits industrial action to day-to-day economic questions and confines the political struggle to parliamentary channels.

However, the unions cannot effectively defend the interests of the workers if they restrict their activities to seeking better terms for the sale of labour power to capital. They must take up all questions affecting the lives of working people. They must become active in the struggle for fundamental social change.

The return of the unions to their rightful function necessarily entails the replacement of union bureaucrats with union officials who base their activity on an anti-capitalist outlook. This task cannot be achieved without the development of class consciousness and combativity in the union ranks.

The bureaucracy's hold over the unions is based on reformist illusions fostered within the working class during the long postwar capitalist economic boom. These illusions can be overcome only in the course of developing political action. Through their own struggle, the broadest layers of the working class must reach the understanding that it is objectively impossible to achieve genuinely human conditions of life under the capitalist system.

In the course of these experiences, the party's members in the unions seek not only to introduce socialist ideas to workers participating in struggles for immediate demands, but to be the most effective leaders of these struggles. This is the only way to rid the trade unions of their bureaucratic misleaders, the only way socialists can win influence in the trade-union movement and make it an instrument in the struggle against capitalism. It is the only way they can roll back the bureaucracy's domination of the unions, replacing it with an apparatus of workplace representatives and leaving only the most essential central functions to the unions' full-time officials.

The number of party members holding official positions in the trade unions is a measure of the party's influence, but it is by no means the most important. Far more significant is the percentage of rank-and-file party activists in relation to the whole union membership, the extent of circulation of the party's press, and the number of working men and women who respond to the party's appeals for action.

Without a firm base of support among the unions' ranks, and a strong involvement of party activists in the unions, party members who hold official union positions face the danger of becoming either captives of the union bureaucracy or degenerating into mere officeholders.

Active unionists, especially those who hold official positions, are beset by innumerable pressures to turn aside from the road of class struggle. They can resist these pressures only by maintaining the closest contact with the party and by consistently seeking to extend the party's influence among the working masses, winning them to the party's policies and socialist goals.

Socialist electoral tactics

The main form of the struggle of the working class for political power is the mass mobilisation of working people in strikes, demonstrations, pickets, etc. This necessarily involves the development of new forms of organisation independent of the apparatus of the capitalist state.

Nevertheless, it is also essential to extend the influence of the revolutionary party by utilising the representative institutions of capitalist democracy, that is, its popularly elected bodies at the national, state and local level.

The party seeks to win representation in these bodies not in order to reform capitalist society, but above all to put forward its ideas in an arena that is still regarded by the mass of working people as the main political forum and vehicle for satisfying their social needs.

One of the party's central tasks in these arenas is to explain the limitations and essentially anti-democratic nature of the system of capitalist parliamentary democracy and to explain how a genuine system of popular self-government, based on social ownership of the

decisive means of production, would immensely increase the real participation of the masses and their control over decisions that affect their lives.

If the party succeeds in winning representation, or even a majority, in the local representative institutions of the capitalist parliamentary state, it will seek to use these bodies as a base for mobilisation against the national and state governments. At the same time, the party will seek to use these local government bodies to carry out reforms to alleviate the sufferings of the poorest sections of the population, and will take all progressive measures possible within the framework of these institutions.

When the party conducts parliamentary electoral campaigns, its primary goal is not to maximise its representation but to develop the political awareness and self-activity of the masses and to draw all progressive organisations into mass political activity.

The party does not view its parliamentary candidates as a special layer of "experts." Rather, its candidates should be drawn from the ranks of the movement with one overriding criterion: the desire and conviction to put the needs of the working class above personal interests and ambitions.

The party's members in parliament should regard themselves as revolutionary activists who are carrying out an intervention into the enemy's camp. They should use their parliamentary position to popularise the party's policies and to help build the anti-capitalist struggle. They must work closely under the party's direction, remaining accountable to it, or in the case of parliamentary representatives of electoral alliances, they should maintain the closest contact and remain accountable to the broader united formation as well.

In addition, the parliamentary representatives of the party, or of electoral alliances which it supports, should develop and organise forums to report to, and hear from, the broadest numbers of people within their electorate, thus encouraging the active and conscious political involvement of working people.

The party's specific electoral tactics may vary from election to election and will depend on the size and influence of the party, the state of the mass movement, the general political situation, etc. For a relatively large party, running its own candidates is the optimum approach, and this can be the most effective option even for a party that is still relatively small. However, at all stages of its development, the party's electoral tactics should encourage the development of the mass movement, the unity of working-class struggle, and the development of the party's own influence. Tactics to achieve these ends might include:

- Critical support for the candidates of one or another capitalist party as a lesser evil.
- Support and political endorsement for candidates of progressive formations when their policies offer partial solutions to the problems facing the masses.
- Non-aggression agreements with other forces in specific electorates.

- Development of electoral alliances on a platform of progressive demands.
- Agreements in regard to exchange of preferences between progressive candidates.
- Agreements in regard to joint electoral tickets in multi-candidate electorates.

It is imperative that the party attempt to improve its standing and strength through bold and innovative use of one or more of these tactics. This is particularly so in periods of comparatively limited mass activity, when the masses see the ballot box as their only or main means of redressing their grievances. This applies even today, when the monopolisation of media power has more and more leached the limited democratic content out of parliamentary elections.

Despite these obstacles, socialists cannot afford a view that rejects participation in the parliamentary arena, even if this rejection stems from justifiable disgust at the sham of parliamentary democracy.

Socialists and the Australian Labor Party

The Australian Labor Party is a social-democratic, liberal-capitalist party, and as such can never be reformed into a genuine socialist party. Because it holds the allegiance of important sections of the working class, the ALP is an obstacle to the further development of working-class consciousness, and must be replaced by a revolutionary socialist party.

Replacing the ALP with such a party is not a task for the distant future, but one that socialists must pursue at all times. The struggle to replace the ALP with a revolutionary socialist party is a complex and lengthy process requiring a variety of tactics. No single tactic can be suitable in all the circumstances that arise as shifts in capitalist society alter the balance between the capitalist class and the working class or between liberalism and conservatism within the capitalist class.

The ALP is a vital part of Australian capitalism's attempt to contain within capitalist limits the political activity of workers and other fighters for social progress. Despite the fact that most trade unions are affiliated to it, the ALP is not, as is often claimed, the political arm of the labour movement. It is one of the two main political parties of the Australian capitalist ruling class.

The ALP attracts working-class support partly because of its links with the trade-union bureaucracy and partly because its liberal-capitalist policies often seem "fairer" than those of the conservative parties. These factors enable the ALP to posture as the party of the working class.

Because the ALP has mass working-class support, currents within it sometimes reflect the anticapitalist consciousness of sections of the working class. This does not alter the fact that the leadership of the ALP is invariably dominated by political agents of the capitalist class.

In periods of capitalist crisis, progressive and even potentially socialist currents sometimes emerge within the ALP. Unless these currents break completely with the capitalist, parliamentarist politics of the ALP, they remain simply the left wing of capitalist liberalism, and an integral part of the capitalist political machinery.

A persistent source of error for left forces in the ALP is an insistence on remaining within the ALP in all circumstances. Like all political tactics, the tactic of working within the ALP must be judged according to its suitability in the political conditions of a given time. At times of mass political action or political crisis, it may be appropriate for progressive forces to remain within the ALP so as to encourage a mass break with its procapitalist leadership. At other times, it is totally wasteful for progressive or socialist forces to use up their resources in an arena controlled and dominated by reactionary, procapitalist elements.

Because it is a liberal-capitalist party, the ALP sometimes opposes projects and policies of the conservative parties, and in such circumstances it is possible and necessary for socialists to build alliances with it. Alliances are also possible with sections of the ALP that oppose anti-democratic, anti-worker projects of capitalist governments, whether Liberal or Labor.

Like all alliances, agreements with all or part of the ALP must necessarily be precisely defined and subject to regular scrutiny and critical assessment. Because the underlying assumption of all ALP politics is the preservation of capitalism, there can be no permanent and generalised alliance between socialists and the ALP.

Too often, left forces in the trade-union movement and other spheres assume that they owe an automatic and all-embracing allegiance to the ALP because it is the liberal, rather than the conservative, party of Australian capitalism. As a result of this ill-considered attitude towards alliances, many left and progressive activists have been coopted into supporting Labor's anti-worker projects.

Socialists enter into alliances with the ALP, or with sections of it, to defend the interests of working people, to improve the strategic position of the progressive and socialist forces, and to foster motion towards deeper mass political consciousness, particularly among those sections of the masses that look to the ALP for political leadership.

Socialists reject any view that it is necessary to support the ALP in the interests of working-class unity. Political unity with the procapitalist ALP leadership is unity for reactionary ends. Sometimes, the reactionary policies of the ALP leadership provoke sections of the membership to break away in progressive directions. Socialists should support such breaks even if they weaken the ALP electorally, and even if they do not represent complete rejection of all capitalist politics.

When progressive currents break away from the ALP, they should be encouraged in every way to adopt socialist politics, but even should they fail to do this it is important to encourage them to go through further experiences leading towards socialist conclusions.

This is best done by encouraging resolute struggle in support of progressive issues, particularly those that led to the initial break with the ALP leadership.

The party also rejects any view that it, or other working-class activists, should automatically recommend a vote for the ALP. But in circumstances in which voters are offered only a choice between a liberal-capitalist ALP government and a government of the conservative parties, socialists recommend a vote for the ALP. There are a number of reasons for this:

- Whether their daily lives are to be governed by a liberal or a conservative capitalist government is not a matter of indifference to most working people. The ALP usually governs less repressively than the conservatives, and more readily grants economic and social concessions. Because of this, most working people usually do not consider abstention a serious option in parliamentary elections.
- Having the ALP in government is essential to the process of destroying widely held illusions that the ALP is a working-class or progressive party. In office, the ALP forms capitalist governments, which can be clearly seen carrying out reactionary, anti-worker policies.

When the question of government is at stake, as in general elections, socialists should recommend that their preferences flow to the ALP in order to help prevent the election of the conservatives. However, if the question of government is not at stake, as in the case of a by-election, socialists might not necessarily recommend that preferences should flow to any of the capitalist parties.

Mobilisation of the allies of the working class

While the working class is the only force with the social power to overthrow capitalist rule, even in a country like Australia where the working class comprises the vast majority of the population, it cannot succeed in abolishing capitalism and beginning the socialist reconstruction of society without support from its allies in intermediate classes. At the same time, these allies — the traditional petty bourgeoisie and self-employed or salaried professionals and technicians — share an objective interest with the working class in breaking the domination of monopoly capital.

The composition and character of the middle classes have undergone significant changes as the structure and composition of the working class itself has changed. But these changes in no way reduce the importance of forging an alliance with them. Unless the workers' movement can demonstrate to broad layers of the middle classes that it can offer a solution to the problems monopoly capitalism imposes on them, they will tend to come under the influence of demagogic representatives of big capital who will seek to mobilise them against the working class.

The mobilisation of the middle-class allies of the working class in Australia poses problems far different from those in countries where the working class is a minority and

is surrounded by large numbers of petty-bourgeois producers, including a massive peasantry.

The traditional middle-class allies of the working class have primarily been small independent producers and proprietors — working farmers, small shopkeepers and artisans. However, changes in the structure of industry, agriculture and the labour force through the growth and further monopolisation of Australian capital since the Second World War have radically reduced the social weight of these classical petty-bourgeois layers.

Nevertheless, the importance of these traditional petty-bourgeois strata is greater than their numbers would indicate. The products and services provided by these small proprietors make an important contribution to the standard of living of the working class. Working farmers in particular supply food, fibres and other agricultural products essential to the well-being of the entire population.

While the monopolisation of Australian capital has reduced the relative weight of the petty bourgeoisie, it has not eliminated it. In fact, monopolisation continually generates a strata of small proprietors who fill small but important gaps in the system of production, distribution and provision of services. Some sectors of the petty bourgeoisie — those offering specialised services and technical skills — even increase in significance relative to the population as a whole and relative to their own previous position.

The modern petty bourgeoisie is a highly variegated social class, hybrid between capital and wage labour. Within it are those who have accumulated enough capital to begin to hire others to work alongside themselves and who are thus on the verge of becoming fully-fledged capitalists. But as well, there are those (like independent owner-drivers) who simply own their own tools (even if they are expensive tools), hire no labour, and with each downturn of the capitalist business cycle find themselves thrown back into the ranks of the working class. The deepening capitalist economic crisis also generates a layer of semi-proletarians — small producers forced to supplement the meager income provided by their own business by selling their labour power to an employer.

The working class and the independent petty proprietors form the two exploited classes within capitalist society. Big capital exploits the latter through bank loans and state taxes, and through monopoly pricing arrangements. The monopolies extract surplus value from independent producers like small farmers by forcing them to sell their produce at low prices and to buy the raw materials and producer goods they need (seed, fertiliser, farm machinery, etc.) at high prices.

In addition to new groups of small proprietors, monopoly capitalism has created a spectrum of professionals, technicians and other salaried occupations — the so-called new middle class.

At one end of this spectrum are sizable numbers of teachers, low-paid technicians, and other employees on small salaries. The ruling class does its utmost to create the illusion

that these people belong to the middle classes. However, the levels of income, social status, and conditions of work of most of these salaried employees are increasingly similar to those of "blue-collar" industrial workers. Thus, the distinction between a teacher, a lower salaried technician or a bank clerk, and a manual worker on an assembly line is increasingly a distinction within the working class itself between skilled, semiskilled, and unskilled workers. Most of these salaried employees have no perspective of ever being able to make a living other than by selling their labour power and are thus part of the working class.

At the other end of the spectrum of professionals and technicians are the self-employed or highly paid lawyers, journalists, accountants, university professors, doctors, engineers, scientists, etc. The remuneration they receive is often sufficient for them to make sizable investments. This layer as a whole tends to consciously identify with the employing class, its political command, and its ideology. However, even these professionals, especially the younger ones, can move in an anticapitalist direction under the hammer blows of the growing social crisis of monopoly capitalism.

In seeking allies among intermediate layers, the workers' movement must distinguish between salaried employees required to maintain capitalist *relations of production*, and those needed to maintain and expand the *forces of production*. Among the former are those whose function is to maintain or increase the rate of exploitation (for example, managerial personnel, supervisors, time and motion experts) and those whose role is related to the state's repressive apparatus (for example, police, prison guards, certain social workers). Among the latter are scientific and technical researchers, engineers, draughtsmen, statisticians, etc. Historical experience has shown that while the vast majority of the former group remain enemies of the workers' movement, many of the latter can be attracted to the socialist cause.

Occupying an intermediate position between wage labour and capital, the middle classes vacillate between the two decisive social classes and have no independent social perspective or program for society as a whole. In critical situations they tend to throw their support behind one of the decisive social classes. It would therefore be fatal for the working class to attempt to forge an alliance with the middle classes by abandoning its own program and accepting some specious "middle-class program" that respects capitalist political and economic power.

Such an orientation would divide the working class, the main force for progressive social change. It would pit its most class-conscious and combative elements, increasingly won to the perspective of socialism, against its backward elements, still under the sway of capitalist ideology. It would demoralise workers struggling against flagrant exploitation or abuse of their rights by the exploiter section of the middle classes.

Moreover, such an orientation would not help to cement an alliance between the working class and the middle classes. The problems confronting the oppressed and exploited sections of the middle classes are generated by the deepening crisis of monopoly capitalism. As these problems grow worse the middle classes will look for radical

answers to their problems, breaking from the ideological hold of the traditional capitalist parties. An alliance policy that does not challenge monopoly capitalism will inevitably fail to provide cogent answers to their problems, leading radicalised sections of the middle classes to turn away from the working class toward ultraright or fascist political forces.

The working class can forge an alliance with the middle classes, particularly their lower, exploited and oppressed layers, only by demonstrating that it has clear answers to their problems and the workers have the power and will to implement them.

The small independent producers — many of whom face expropriation by big capital — must be convinced that the socialist aim of expropriating capital does not threaten their property. It is necessary to prove to these layers that there is no antagonism between, on the one hand, workers' control of production, the abolition of commercial and banking secrets, the nationalisation of the banks, freight companies, agribusiness and industrial monopolies, a state monopoly of foreign trade and, on the other hand, reduced freight charges, lower prices for industrial products (fertiliser, machinery, consumer goods), cancellation of debts and provision of cheap credit terms, and which can also stimulate the voluntary formation of cooperatives.

A series of working-class demands can meet the most pressing needs of these layers: introduction of fair taxation, radical improvement of the social security system, and development of the social infrastructure (housing, hospitals, schools, childcare facilities, etc.).

The determination of the workers' movement to respond positively to crucial social problems, such as the destruction of the environment and the threat of nuclear war, and to fight for the political, social and economic rights of the specially oppressed sections of the population can draw broad layers of the middle classes to the side of the workers.

By supporting the progressive demands and struggles of the middle classes and linking these struggles with those of the working class, the socialist movement can forge a broad alliance between them, mobilising and unifying the labouring masses in action against the political and economic power of monopoly capital.

Self-organisation of the masses and the struggle for power

United action by the workers and their allies is most effective when their alliance is founded on democratically elected local committees committed to the systematic promotion of mass anti-capitalist action.

As the class struggle sharpens and the working people take the initiative to impose their own solutions to problems created by capitalism, experiments in self-organisation multiply in the workplaces and localities. Along with this, there are more and more examples of workers' control going beyond the framework of individual workplaces. In order to coordinate their actions, the working people will need to elect representatives

from their workplaces and neighbourhoods to city-wide councils of working people's delegates.

The development of such councils and the broadening of their sphere of action poses a direct challenge to the authority of capitalist rule. The development of workers' control can reduce this authority in fields such as communications, public transportation, banking, and industrial enterprises.

This weakening of the authority of capitalist rule can reach into the armed forces as well. Under the impact of mass mobilisations, antimilitarist work inside the capitalist army, and the struggle for the democratic rights of soldiers, rank-and-file military committees can be encouraged inside the army, posing a major challenge to the functioning of the military apparatus and making it possible to win the soldiers to the side of the insurgent masses.

As the conflict between the major classes sharpens, the capitalist rulers will almost certainly resort to legal and extra-legal forms of violence against the workers and their allies. For this reason, the working people must be prepared to defend their activities, organisations, headquarters and press against such violence through the formation of broadly-based self-defence squads.

The generalisation, coordination and centralisation of the councils of working people's delegates will increasingly challenge the legitimacy of the institutions of capitalist democracy. The capitalist class and its labour lieutenants will seek to discredit any forms of popular power by maintaining that the parliamentary institutions of the capitalist state are the only legitimate organs of democracy. To clear the way for the overturn of the state power of the capitalist rulers and the establishment of the state power of the working class the masses must first understand the real role of the capitalists' parliamentary institutions. Practical experience of mass struggles and mobilisation, in which they can test the limits that these capitalist institutions impose on their freedom of action, will demonstrate to working people the superiority of their own independent bodies of democratic self-organisation.

The disintegration of the capitalist state apparatus under the impact of the growing counter-power of the working people's councils will lead inevitably to a showdown between the masses and the capitalist regime. The resolution of that confrontation in favour of the working class and its allies depends on the development of the following basic conditions:

1. The impasse of capitalist rule and the resulting confusion within the capitalist ruling class and the leading personnel of its state machine.
2. The sharp dissatisfaction and desire for radical change in the ranks of the middle classes, without whose support the capitalist regime cannot maintain itself.

3. The consciousness of the intolerable situation and the readiness for action in the ranks of the working class.

4. The existence of a revolutionary party that enjoys the confidence of the broad masses and is capable of offering clear and decisive leadership.

Once a certain threshold in these conditions has been reached, the workers and their allies will be in a position to topple the capitalist government and replace it with a government of their own. The creation of a working people's government, based on democratically elected councils of working people's delegates, will open the road to the socialist reconstruction of society.