their political activity (to borrow a description from Richard Farson) “will be experiential, rather than utilitarian, and the purpose of life will not be to use themselves for ulterior goals, but to experience themselves, not to use others, but to experience others, not to use their environment, but to experience it in the fullness of its possibilities for richness and beauty.” Thus confrontation — while directed towards the overthrow of institutional arrangements and modes of thinking — does not include the annihilation of persons. The practising and realisation of the vision must go on simultaneously with the confrontation. The two are inextricably linked. Persons cannot be sacrificed as things. One cannot postpone the revolution to man until after the revolution for man has been achieved.

While one can endure puerile and tedious epithets like “Anatole France Lemmings' League” and “the Barber’s Cat Self-Improvement Society” simply because they are puerile and tedious, the blatant desecration of truth in conjunction with the assailing of one’s character is something else again.

If the Teichmann piece is a paradigm case of verbal violence — the above representing only a small sampling — some of the tracts and remarks pouring out of other sections of the Australian Left are also afflicted with the disorder. A Qld. Peace Committee official and a prominent trade unionist, for example, told a public meeting that Brian Laver had swung over to the DLP, as is often the wont of former radicals, because he was opposed to the amalgamation of the metal trade unions. Then, there is the Humphrey McQueen campaign against Dr. Cairns. At the Anti-War Conference in February he delivered a paper in which he charged Cairns with issuing a “call for neo-capitalism” and with conducting a “public campaign on Vietnam (that) is part of his entire counter-revolutionary project”. His case was constructed from a series of selective quotations taken out of context and situation, and sometimes linked by innuendo to the reactionary statements of other people*. While McQueen’s tone lacks Teichmann’s shrillness and intemperance, this merely makes the contents more convincing to those unable to check the original sources. Conspiratorial reports circulate that Cairns is a ‘neo-capitalist’, a ‘counter-revolutionist’, even a ‘warmonger’. In Melbourne a pamphlet issued by Tocsin adds some more isolated quotes of Cairns’ to the original list. And in Brisbane we hear there is documented proof that Cairns is playing a counter-revolutionary role in the Anti-War movement.

It’s not that people spreading this verbal violence are always acting out of malice or insincerity — who can deem their motives — but we must stop it somewhere. And if not through the responsibility of each individual, where then?

Ralph V. Summy

COMMUNIST ACTIVITY AND LABOR PARTY CHANGE

IT SEEMS TO ME that John Sendy in his article on “Socialism and the ALP Left” in your March number makes the mistake of trying to analyse the ALP without taking into account the influence that can and must be exerted upon it by a much strengthened Communist Party applying united front policies.

* A slightly revised version of McQueen’s original paper will appear in a forthcoming issue of Arena, which will also contain an extensive reply to the charges he levels at Cairns.

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Basing himself on the present situation, Comrade Sendy concludes that communists should be less “initiators of reform movements” and more “activists and ideologists aiming to exert political and theoretical influence” on movements arising apart from their initiative. This amounts to something a good deal less than the party’s role as seen by Dimitrov — “at bottom the initiator, the organiser and the driving force of the united front of the working class”. This conception of a reduced role for the Communist Party is in keeping with the line pursued by the party’s representatives when they opposed the paragraph in the document of the 1969 International Meeting calling for the role of the marxist-leninist parties to be enhanced and for them to march in the front ranks of the revolutionary and democratic movements. An enhanced role can of course only be won by the merit of our work and our ideas but, in my opinion, we must always aim for such an enhanced role, not accept a reduced one.

Given a reduced role for the Communist Party, a dim view of the Labor Party follows. Such a development as has occurred in Chile, with a socialist party leader advancing a program that challenges the very basis of US power in Chile, reflects the strong influence of a united front in which the Communist Party is a very powerful force. Apart from the many years’ excellent organising and ideological work of the Communist Party of Chile, the Allende regime could hardly have emerged.

In general, the leftward movements within the Labor Party can be traced to mass activity initiated by other organisations. The swing of the Labor Party majority against conscription in 1916 was due largely to strong prior campaigning by the IWW, socialist and pacifist groups. The eleventh-hour change of the Labor Party in 1951 to a position of fighting against the Communist Party Dissolution Act occurred after 12 months of an ever-widening public campaign initiated largely by communists in the first instance. The opposition to troops for Vietnam came on the basis of an already mounting mass upsurge. Activities confined to Labor Party circles can usually be contained by the powerful Labor Party machine. Hence the importance of the mass activity that WE can initiate or stimulate.

Is it true, as John Sendy says, that the changing of the ALP in a socialist direction is a “forlorn hope”? Should we jettison the view expressed by the communist parties of the world on this matter in the 81-Party statement of 1960? Certainly, in its background and present ideology, the ALP is non-socialist. Certainly it is subject, especially when in office, to tremendous pressure from the main monopoly power centres Australian and international. Moreover, the only real socialism is marxism and most of what has passed for socialism in the Labor Party is non-marxist. But the very fact that gives rise to John’s article — the existence of a Victorian branch of the Labor Party as it operated in the past 15 years, declaring its faith in socialism and fairly consistently supporting left policies, proves that the Labor Party can change in some circumstances. We can again refer also to Chile, and we can remind ourselves that Spanish socialists fought alongside communists and other democrats, arms in hand, in a great democratic cause against terrible odds for nearly three years in the late 1930’s.

Lance Sharkey, writing in 1957, in his foreword to the second edition of his pamphlet The Labor Party Crisis, said that in 1954-55, the Labor Party had, by and large, returned to its traditional liberal-democratic standpoints, but
that world conditions had changed and it was possible that the Labor Party could, in some respects, go past its previous standpoints. Add to the changed world conditions the force that the Communist Party CAN AND MUST become, and we certainly see the possibility of future radical leftward movement by the main body of Labor Party people. (In the process some right breakaways would no doubt be inevitable).

Comrade Sendy, while agreeing the ALP cannot be ignored in any revolutionary strategy, considers that “the problems of the ALP, while very important, are by no means the cardinal question that they used to be, because of the proliferation of left wing struggle”. I believe that the problems of the ALP are no less important than previously because it still retains the support of the mass of the industrial working class which, as our last party Congress re-asserted, is decisive for social change in Australia. The “proliferation of left wing struggle” is largely among circles of petty bourgeois origin which, despite their many fine qualities, lack industrial power and long-term stability.

Despite all the wrongs committed by labor governments, I do not think we should use inverted commas in speaking of the advance involved in electing a labor government under Whitlam. Mass movements have compelled the Labor Party to commit itself pretty heavily on the Vietnam war, on conscription and various other issues. A new labor government, if mass pressure is sustained and developed, could open the way to important victories on key issues which would, in turn, help the mass movement further forward, at the same time as it would expose the severe limitations of a Whitlam-type policy. (Clear exposure of these limitations in practice would in itself be an advance.)

Most workers, while a good deal disillusioned about labor governments, will certainly be hoping for the return of a labor government in 1972, and if we do not work hard to this end, we shall be divorcing ourselves very much from the workers generally. It would be wrong to see (as some do) the return of a labor government as all-important and not see the crucial importance of the right-left struggle within the Labor Party. But the return of a labor government is a very important next step forward, and communists should work hard for it, strengthening their relations with Labor Party people in the process while, at the same time, advancing their own policy through their own candidates. Given the growth of the mass struggle, and the growth of our party, the return of a labor government could bring a real advance without inverted commas.

John correctly rejects the view that we should in no way participate in parliamentary or election activity. But is he too negative about such activity? He quotes Lenin on “the most shameless careerism . . . glaringly reformist perversion of parliamentary activity”, etc. and his terms fit present Australian parliaments aptly enough. But Lenin also insisted on the urgent need for communists in western countries to develop what he called a “non-opportunist, non-careerist parliamentarism”.

In the present changed world conditions, with very strong mass movements under way in most countries and with the socialist countries exerting ever greater weight in world affairs, parliaments may sometimes play a vital progressive role as indicated by the 20th Congress of the CPSU. Chile affords a striking example of what can be done through elections and parliamentary action backed
by years of mass struggle of workers, peasants and students; and this remains a historic example even should United States imperialism succeed in temporarily destroying it.

In conclusion, I would repeat that the subject of the article — “the position of the various left wing or left of centre sections of the ALP” — cannot be studied apart from the development of united struggle and the influence of a much strengthened marxist-leninist party.

RALPH GIBSON

THE AUSTRALIAN “URBAN GUERRILLA”

I WAS INTERESTED TO READ the material in your last issue about the struggle in Latin America, and to learn that the views of Carlos Marighela on waging the main battle by guerrilla warfare in urban areas were also to be published. Australian revolutionaries should have attitudes of respect for and solidarity with, the urban guerrillas of Latin America who are engaged in heroic struggle against the repression, torture and poverty perpetrated by present rulers and their US overlords, but I think the different approaches needed in Australia should also be pointed out.

The Minimanual of the Urban Guerrilla by Carlos Marighela outlines the methods of the Brazilian urban guerrillas carried out in copybook fashion by the kidnappings of the Ambassadors and subsequent release of a number of left wing political prisoners. The justness and necessity of armed urban revolutionary struggle in such contexts as that prevailing in Brazil seems obvious. Armed struggle, urban and rural, as a revolutionary method is undoubtedly valid in countries where political repression, torture and violence is the order of the day, where grinding poverty and total lack of political rights depress the mass of people.

Armed guerrilla action is only possible, and justified, in specific conditions, when that form of struggle is the only real avenue open, when it can inspire and mobilise masses of people or has that distinct possibility. The Chinese and Cuban revolutions amply illustrate this point. As Martin Oppenheimer puts it “Society must suffer from sufficient strains so as to allow (armed) revolutionary activity to ‘make sense’”. The Latin American urban guerrilla therefore deals with machine guns, explosives and firing groups as well as leaflets, slogans and political action.

However our Australian urban guerrilla is a revolutionary, a socialist, armed with substantiated criticism of the system and with at least some kind of revolutionary perspective, who protests, demonstrates, speaks and writes, supports the NLF, sits in, fights to organise and educate large numbers of students and workers to an anti-capitalist position and is prepared to wage a many-sided and protracted fight for a socialist Australia.

Our urban guerrilla studies Marx, Lenin, Mao, Marcuse, Guevara, Gramsci, Chomsky and all writers who have contributed to the wealth of social theory, regarding their works as a valuable assistant to the formation of a coherent and viable socialist strategy in Australia. Our guerrilla seeks to assist the development of counter culture and counter structures and strives to pose challenges to the capitalist system which are difficult to absorb and which awaken peoples' consciousness.