

THE NATIVE NATIONAL QUESTION AND THE MARXIST-LENINIST MOVEMENT

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Social-Democrats of an oppressor nation, particularly of the so-called Great Powers, must demand the right to self-determination – the right to secession for the oppressed nations, upholding this right not only in the legal, but especially in the illegal, press and especially in wartime.

In view of the elementary, ABC nature of [this] thesis ..., its acceptance by all democrats and Marx + Engels 1848-76, and its confirmation by the experience of the war, – Social-Democrats who do not recognize this thesis should be treated as enemies of the proletariat and deceivers of the worst kind, and expelled from the party.

Lenin, *Notebooks on Imperialism*

Canada's Colony

Canada's borders contain three nations: English Canada, French Canada, and Native Canada. As we have ascertained (see *LD* no. 1, p. 26), this was the position of Lenin and the Second Congress of the Communist International.

Native Canada, unlike the oppressor nation of English Canada and the oppressed nation of Quebec, is not a bourgeois nation of the Second World but a colonized nation of the Third World. The imperialist bourgeoisie of Canada and the United States colludes to exploit the vast and lush resources of Northern Canada – oil, gas, metals, water, forests, and furs – in complete defiance of the will of the native population. The bourgeoisie does not permit secondary industries or petty capitalism to develop there except in a limited degree and when it perceives it as being to its own specific advantage. In fact, the entire economy of the North is under the control of a small number of giant conglomerates who plan the extraction of resources in order to drain the maximum amount of profits back to Southern Canada and the United States. As in the rest of the Third World, facilities such as railroads and highways are constructed to facilitate the transport of resources from the extraction sites to the mother country, and not to stimulate the growth of indigenous industry in the colonized territory. The native population is left in impoverishment and misery – jobless, malnourished, diseased, uneducated, forced to live on welfare, herded into “strategic hamlets” to make way for the imperialists, and

stripped of any participation in the decision-making process of local government.

Life in the North is imported. The bourgeoisie sends workers from Southern Canada to visit the North, in most cases on a temporary and seasonal basis, to do the work of extracting the resources and return home to collect unemployment insurance. Imported labour is expensive but apparently the profits which the bourgeoisie can extract from the North make it all worthwhile. This, too, is a common Third World pattern. U.S. and Soviet workers are shipped around the world to man the oil rigs and are then shipped back home with the oil, while native masses sit by poverty-stricken and revolutionary ferment festers.

A major study of Canadian political economy concludes without doubt that resources are extracted from the North with elaborate capital equipment and imported labour, and they are processed in the more developed industrial sectors of Southern Canada and the United States.¹ We refer readers also to E. Dosman, *The National Interest*, an account of the collusion of the Canadian and the American bourgeoisie – backed by the Canadian state – to build the Mackenzie Valley pipeline in defiance of the voice of the Native population, That this is the typical relationship which all colonies and semi-colonies have with the more developed countries of the capitalist world is obvious. As everywhere, too, this process is known as

1 Camu, Pierre; Weeks, E.P.; and Sametz, Z.W., *Economic Geography of Canada*, Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1964, ch. 7.

“development.” This is the way the bourgeoisie of Canada and the United States colludes to “develop” the North.

In double-think, extraction is development. No distinction is made between extraction and social development. This is illustrated in the combination of conflicting portfolios under the ministry of northern development and Indian affairs.²

The Native population of the North, like Native populations throughout the Third World, is governed by a colonial administration which assumes absolute control over their lives. In the North, the Canadian state has enforced the imperialist rule of the Canadian and American bourgeoisie by setting up the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development to manage the “special status” of Native people who have been stripped of rights to their land, resources, and lives. The colonial administration has huddled the Native people onto “concentration camps” in order to clear the way for imperialist plunder, and keeps close watch on the internal life of these “reserves” to make sure that economic development on them does not get out of hand. Schools are designed to teach Native children the glories of the colonizers’ way of life; benefits from development projects are “handled” by Indian Affairs, never to be seen again; freedom of movement is restricted between reserve and reserve, requests for improvements are filed and ignored,

2 Davis, Robert and Zannis, Mark, *The Genocide Machine in Canada: The Pacification of the North*, Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1973.

and Native people are classified according to the degree of status which they have with the government.

The Native question assumes particular importance in our struggle to develop a revolutionary programme in Canada because it is central to any concrete analysis of Canada itself. We cannot fully understand the nature of the Canadian bourgeoisie or the role of American imperialism in Canada without grasping the question of Canada's North.

The bourgeoisie at the time of Confederation recognized the danger which the United States was posing to its very existence. In order to prevent the obvious design of the American bourgeoisie to swallow it up, and fuse it by turning ail of Canada into its colony, the Canadian bourgeoisie had one choice: to consolidate its hold on the Northwest, that is, to confederate. Said A.T. Galt, prominent bourgeois of the period:

The question is simply one of Confederation ... or of ultimate absorption by the United States.³

George Brown, a major Toronto capitalist at the time, confirmed this observation.

The opening up of the country belongs not to Great Britain, but to those who will benefit by it, to Canada.... It is an empire we have in view, and its whole export and import trade will be

3 Ryerson, Stanley B., *Unequal Union: Roots of Crisis in the Canadas, 1815-1873*, p. 320

concentrated in the hands of Canadian merchants and manufacturers if we strike for it now.... If we let the West go to the United States, if the rest of the continent outside Canada and the Atlantic provinces acknowledge the sway of the Republic, we should be unable to contend with her. Our ultimate absorption would be inevitable.⁴

This understanding on the part of the Canadian bourgeoisie was summed up by its executive committee, the Canadian state, when Sir John A. MacDonald said:

It is quite evident to me ... that the U.S. government is resolved to do all they can, short of war, to get possession of the Western territory, and we must make immediate and vigorous steps to counteract them.⁵

And those “vigorous steps to counteract them” included, of course, not only confederation but its inevitable accompaniment: the genocide of Native people. “Should these miserable half-breeds not disband,” concluded MacDonald, “they must be put down.”⁶ Thus the Native people and Metis were pushed out of the way in order that the Canadian bourgeoisie could stake out an independent existence for itself and stake out an empire.

But, as everybody in the world (except the CCL(ML)) knows, the Canadian bourgeoisie did not succeed in

4 *Ibid.*, p. 321

5 *Ibid.*, p. 341

6 *Ibid.*, p. 388

carving out a truly independent course for itself. The American bourgeoisie was too powerful. The influence of the Canadian petit-bourgeoisie was very strong in the nineteenth century,⁷ so strong, in fact, that it won the ear of the provincial governments in blocking Canadian monopoly capitalist attempts to dominate the hydroelectric and the pulp and paper industries. The petit-bourgeoisie pushed so hard for the interests of the small proprietor against the strength of the monopoly capitalists that the United States bourgeoisie was able to take advantage of the situation and establish its dominance in large sections of industry throughout Canada. There is no question that the struggle of the Canadian bourgeoisie to expand into the North and West was indispensable to its establishment as an imperialist power in its own right; but the power of the United States made itself felt to the degree that that bourgeoisie could not but collude with the American bourgeoisie in order to spread its influence.

Thus the American imperialist bourgeoisie and the Canadian bourgeoisie, at the beginning of the twentieth century, were now co-operating in the push to expand into the North and grab the resources for imperialist extraction. In minerals, in the search for water, in the forest industry, the story was all the same. And the title of the story: imperialism.

7 A comparable movement in the United States was that of the Populists, which was a struggle of the petit-bourgeoisie against the dominance of the monopoly bourgeoisie. In the United States, however, the petit-bourgeoisie lost this struggle to the indigenous monopoly bourgeoisie. In Canada, in many sectors, it won – only to be defeated by the American imperialists who moved into the situation.

The question in any development policy must be “Who benefits?”, and northern development to date has shown that only a small, ABSENTEE minority gets the profits from the mining ventures. The history of the Pine Point mine illustrates how this approach to northern development works towards the benefit of one group. The Pine Point mine is owned by Cominco, which is a subsidiary of Canadian Pacific. It was the Canadian government, through Canadian National Railways, that built the railway to Pine Point... Pine Point has obviously been a fabulous bonanza – for the shareholders of Cominco. Great play is always made of how the “technological breakthroughs” have made new mines possible in the north; little mention is made of the dependence on government subsidies... The Yukon has its “one big mine”, and so has the Northwest Territories. Anvil’s benefits will be spread over the Yukon – as will be its liabilities (e.g., roads used by both tourists and ore trucks). Pine Point, located at the southern edge of the Northwest Territories, will spread new benefits around.

The new mines do not employ many people.⁸

The Native question assumes even further importance in the struggles ahead in Canada because of the threat which Soviet social-imperialism and fascism poses to the peoples of the world. As the power of American imperialism is on the decline, Soviet social-imperialism is everywhere

8 Lotz, Jim, *Northern Realities*, Toronto: New Press, 1972.

seeking to compete with it and horn in on its old spheres of influence. This superpower finds Third World territory particularly tempting, and, as one comrade put it to us, “you know, they don’t mind the cold”

Consequently, in Canada, contradictions between the Canadian bourgeoisie, American imperialism, and Soviet social-imperialism may well concentrate to a certain degree in Canada’s northland. Native Canada may well become an important focal point of contention between the two superpowers, with Canadian imperialism towing the line for the Americans and the Native people getting robbed from all sides. Should this occur, as it well might, the national liberation struggle of Canada’s North will assume exceptional importance in the development of the revolutionary struggle in Canada.

The Native Question and Opportunism

The above arguments are a development of the basic argument which was put forward in “Nationhood or Genocide: The Struggle of the Native People Against Canadian and American Imperialism” (*Canadian Revolution* 1:4), an article now endorsed by the Bolshevik Union.

The Bolshevik Union is not the only group in Canada to put forward the line that Native Canada is a nation with the right of self-determination. The Cercle Communiste (M-L) has also affirmed this right in their document, no. 3, although they put forward a different analysis as to why Native people have this right. The Native Study Group in

Vancouver and other Native people who are oriented to Marxism-Leninism have argued this case. As well, we have in our discussions with individuals encountered some measure of sympathy for the line that Native people have the right to self-determination.

What we must examine, in the context of the Marxist-Leninist movement in Canada, is the question of why, a year after the publication of "Nationhood or Genocide", there has been virtually no written response to the extensive arguments which we put forward in that article; and, in particular, why the two large groups in the movement (*In Struggle!* and the League) have effectively ignored the entire question of the right of Native people to self-determination. To answer this question it is necessary to examine the entire question of right-opportunism in our movement as we have put it forward in "Not With Whom to Go, But Where to Go" and to link it up with the specific issue of the Native national question. The answer will relate to our position that opportunism is rooted in a specific social and economic base, that of the petit-bourgeoisie and the labour aristocracy benefiting from imperialism, and that opportunism is in a majority in the Canadian Marxist-Leninist movement. But first we must show the connection between the colonial status of the North and the right of Native people to self-determination.

The "Definition" of a Nation

It is a Marxist-Leninist principle, put forward by Lenin and defended by Stalin and Mao, that colonized peoples

have the absolute right to self-determination, up to and including secession from their oppressor nation. As Communists we recognize that struggles which weaken the hegemony of the world imperialist system are progressive. This means that the bourgeois democratic revolutions in territories which have not yet achieved bourgeois democracy, that political independence in countries which do not yet have political independence, is a progressive step from the standpoint of the world proletarian revolution; they are a part of the world proletarian revolution and they help to realize it. This is part of the Marxist-Leninist understanding that the Third World is the motive force propelling history forward today. Trotskyites malign these national liberation struggles in the Third World, saying that their nationalism is reactionary and that only a “pure” proletarian revolution is appropriate; revisionists insist that Third World struggles can only be revolutionary when under the hegemony of the “proletarian” struggles of the developed sections of the world. Marxist-Leninists distinguish themselves from these agents of the bourgeoisie by understanding the role which Third World struggles have in the course of world events, by defending their progressive nature and above all by upholding the right of Third World nations to self-determination.

The question of Native nationhood is not to be understood in terms of Stalin’s definition of a nation which he wrote in 1913 to apply to bourgeois nations emerging from feudalism. Native Canada is a colony, and as such it is to be understood in terms of the Marxist-Leninist principle, affirmed by Stalin and Mao, that colonies have the right to

self-determination from their oppressor nations. All national liberation struggles of the Third World should be understood from the point of view of this principle.

This would appear to be a simple point to grasp. But, as we have pointed out in “Not With Whom To Go, But Where to Go” (LD no. 2), the principal contradiction in the Marxist-Leninist movement is not with backwardness; it is with right-opportunism. Right-opportunism has a specific class basis: that of the petit-bourgeoisie and the labour aristocracy which benefits from the superprofits of imperialism and seeks its hegemony over the growing labour struggles in the advanced capitalist countries. Therefore many university-educated members of the Marxist-Leninist movement display amazing learning difficulties when confronted with this very simple explanation of the difference between nations such as Italy and Quebec, on the one hand, and Vietnam and Native Canada, on the other hand.

It is not as if a chorus of voices have arisen in our movement since the publication of “Nationhood or Genocide” to defend Stalin’s definition of a nation as applied to Canada’s North. The dominant trend by far has been a deafening silence. The two major groups in the movement, *In Struggle!* and our “vanguard” the CCL(ML), have refused to even publicly acknowledge the existence of “Nationhood or Genocide”, much less take recourse to Stalin’s definition of a nation to defend their social-chauvinism. But, on the basis of scattered conversations with people throughout the movement, we

know that the fetish of Stalin's definition still renders these very "intelligent" petit-bourgeois very confused.

This is not surprising. Stalin's definition is also used by many people outside of the Marxist-Leninist movement to explain why Native Canada is not a nation. Revisionists, anarchists and trotskyites all use it for this reason.

One might pause to think why all of these tendencies, whose very political existence thrives on the slander of Comrade Stalin, would find such great love for Stalin when the question of Native people in Canada is raised.

The answer is simple. All forms of opportunism share in common the attempt to liquidate the struggles of colonial peoples, because these threaten their attempts to corrupt the proletariat into supporting imperialism. Only Marxism-Leninism supports the principle of self-reliance and self-determination for oppressed peoples of the Third World.

The misuse of Stalin's definition, abstracted from an understanding of imperialism and national liberation struggles, is an ideal tool for enemies of the proletariat to use to explain why the colonies and semi-colonies should be dominated by the proletariat of the advanced capitalist countries. "But they don't have a common language! All those different tribal dialects. . . ."⁹

9 In particular, it is easy to see here why the statement (often heard) that Native people do not have a "common language" and therefore are not a nation is a flat denial of the right of all tribal peoples to self-determination (because of the very nature of their tribal heritages) and hence is a descent into the basest forms of

In contrast, twelve years after *Marxism and the National Question* in which he deals only with nations arising out of the old feudal structures, Stalin says:

Leninism laid bare this crying incongruity, broke down the wall between whites and blacks, between Europeans and Asiatics, between the “civilised” and “uncivilised” slaves of imperialism, and thus linked the national question with the question of the colonies. (*Foundations of Leninism*, Peking, p. 71)

In the transition from the Marxism of competitive capitalism to Leninism, which is Marxism in the era of imperialism, important advances were made in socialist theory to explain a world which had reached a new era. In the *History of the CPSU(B)*, it is explained that opportunism often takes recourse to positions evolved to explain the world of competitive capitalism in order to undermine the development of the world proletarian revolution.

As a result of a study of imperialist capitalism, Lenin, on the basis of the Marxist theory, arrived at the conclusion that the old formula of Engels and Marx no longer corresponded to the new historical conditions, and that the victory of the Socialist revolution was quite possible in one country, taken singly. The opportunists of all countries clung to the old formula of Engels and Marx and accused Lenin of departing from Marxism. But it was Lenin, of course, who was the real Marxist who

racism on a world scale.

had mastered the theory of Marxism, and not the opportunists, for Lenin was advancing the Marxist theory by enriching it with new experience, whereas the opportunists were dragging it back, mummifying it.

What would have happened to the Party, to our revolution, to Marxism, if Lenin had been overawed by the Setter of Marxism and had not had the courage of theoretical conviction to discard one of the old conclusions of Marxism and to replace it by a new conclusion affirming that the victory of Socialism in one country, taken singly, was possible, a conclusion which corresponded to the new historical conditions? The Party would have groped in the dark, the proletarian revolution would have been deprived of leadership, and the Marxist theory would have begun to decay. The proletariat would have lost, and the enemies of the proletariat would have won.

Opportunism does not always mean a direct denial of the Marxist theory or of any of its propositions and conclusions. Opportunism is sometimes expressed in the attempt to cling to certain of the propositions of Marxism that have already become antiquated and to convert them into a dogma, so as to retard further development of Marxism, and, consequently, to retard the development of the revolutionary movement of the proletariat. (pp. 357-8)

Stalin's definition of a nation is not "antiquated"; but it is inadequate to explain all forms of nationhood in the era of imperialism. Therefore it is not surprising that so many who claim to uphold Stalin in his "definition" of a nation are really enemies of Stalin. To substantiate this we need turn no further than to Stalin's own words on the subject of his article, *Marxism and the National Question* (in which his "definition" appears). Stalin attacked those who used his article to repudiate the colonial struggles of oppressed peoples, and Mao considered Stalin's attack on these dogmatists so significant that he quoted it at length.

Semich refers to a passage in Stalin's pamphlet *Marxism and the National Question*, written at the end of 1912. There it says that "the national struggle under the conditions of rising capitalism is a struggle of the bourgeois classes among themselves". Evidently, by this Semich is trying to suggest that his formula defining the social significance of the national movement under the present historical conditions is correct. But Stalin's pamphlet was written before the imperialist war, when the national question was not yet regarded by Marxists as a question of world significance, when the Marxists' fundamental demand for the right to self-determination was regarded not as part of the proletarian revolution, but as part of the bourgeois-democratic revolution. It would be ridiculous not to see that since then the international situation has radically changed, that the war, on the one hand, and the October Revolution in Russia, on the other, transformed the national question from a

part of the bourgeois-democratic revolution into a part of the proletarian-socialist revolution. As far back as October 1916, in his article, "The Discussion on Self-Determination Summed Up", Lenin said that the main point of the national question, the right to self-determination, had ceased to be a part of the general democratic movement, that it had already become a component part of the general proletarian, socialist revolution. I do not even mention subsequent works on the national question by Lenin and by other representatives of Russian communism. After all this, what significance can Semich's reference to the passage in Stalin's pamphlet, written in the period of the bourgeois-democratic revolution in Russia, have at the present time, when, as a consequence of the new historical situation, we have entered a new epoch, the epoch of proletarian revolution? It can only signify that Semich QUOTES OUTSIDE OF SPACE AND TIME, WITHOUT REFERENCE TO THE LIVING HISTORICAL SITUATION, AND THEREBY VIOLATES THE MOST ELEMENTARY REQUIREMENTS OF DIALECTICS, AND IGNORES THE FACT THAT WHAT IS RIGHT FOR ONE HISTORICAL SITUATION MAY PROVE TO BE WRONG IN ANOTHER HISTORICAL SITUATION. (Stalin, as quoted in Mao, "On New Democracy," MSW 11:345-46)

Thus those who use “Stalin’s definition” to deny the right of colonized peoples to self-determination are only using Stalin’s great name to repudiate Stalin.

From "Annexationist Indifference in Practice" to the Support of Annexation

But, as we have said, neither *In Struggle!* nor the League have actively hidden behind Stalin’s definition to defend their opportunism with respect to the Native question. They have handled the situation in an even more contemptible way – by completely ignoring the entire controversial question about the right of Native people to self-determination. Instead of responding to this question in a correct Marxist-Leninist manner – by taking this political question with the seriousness it deserves – both groups have turned around and endorsed the annexation of the Canadian North to Canadian and American imperialist interests. They have clearly put their Economist, trade-unionist, material-incentives mentality in command of the broad questions which will shape the strategy for the Canadian proletarian revolution.

The League

Both *In Struggle!* and the League have taken the line that Canada is an imperialist country. For the League this forms a particularly exaggerated contribution to their self-image and self-promotion. The League has practically defined its existence on the basis of its papier-mache “line” on the principal contradiction, and declared far and wide that it is not Economist because it has this “vanguard”

“line”. Far and wide the League proclaims that unity with other Marxist-Leninists cannot be principled if we do not agree on the principal contradiction. But we ask you, CCL(ML), what do you use this “line” for, other than to congratulate yourselves? We have submitted a serious criticism of it, and you have not responded to it.

You have not been able to relate it to any other questions of strategy for the Canadian revolution. And this all comes home to roost when we examine the Native question. For it is in an understanding of the Canadian North that above all we can see the role which Canadian imperialism plays in exploiting the peoples of the world. The North is the primary resource area of Canadian imperialism. If the League were at all interested in its political line as a concrete development of Marxist-Leninist science, it would pursue the quest to develop that science by examining this implication of the question of Canadian imperialism: that is, that the Canadian imperialist bourgeoisie exploits Canada’s north, and that this has consequences in the development of a revolutionary strategy for Canada.

In the issue of the Native question the opportunism of the League can be precisely summarized. It is not the nature of the Canadian bourgeoisie which is principal to the League, or the role of Canadian imperialism in the world. What is principal to the League is its struggle to seek hegemony over the spontaneous struggles of the Canadian proletariat. This desire for hegemony demands that all of the spontaneous movements within the Canadian state come under the League’s wing – and that includes the

struggle of the Native people. Therefore it is necessary for the League to ignore and minimize the national character of the Native struggle in order to seek to bring it under the wing of the spontaneous struggle of the working class – and therefore of the League.

This is not the work of a few evil ogres consciously conspiring against Native people. It is an inseparable part of their opportunism – their worship of the trade union struggle and their consistent attempt to paint that struggle as a revolutionary struggle, as a class struggle, as the struggle for “state power”, as a fundamental challenge to the rule of the bourgeoisie. Lenin says:

The fundamental error that all the Economists commit (is) their conviction that it is possible to develop the class political consciousness of the workers from within, so to speak, their economic struggle, i.e., making this struggle the exclusive (or, at least, the main) starting point, making it the exclusive, or, at least, the main basis. Such a view is fundamentally wrong. (*What Is To Be Done?*, Peking, p. 97)

By making the economic struggle the “exclusive (or, at least, the main) starting point” of all their political work – and this is clear in the League’s political line (see “Right-Opportunism is Dead! Long Live Right-Opportunism!” in this issue), the Native struggle (which is not principally a trade-unionist struggle of the working class) is given automatic back seat.

And, as Lenin further points out, opportunism also does not descend from the sky but has its social and economic roots in the concrete conditions of capitalist society.

Objectively the opportunists are a section of the petty bourgeoisie and of certain strata of the working class who have been bribed out of imperialist superprofits and converted into watchdogs of capitalism and corrupters of the labour movement. (“Imperialism and the Split in Socialism”, LCW 23:110)

The League seeks to win its greatest victories among the privileged upper stratum of the working class.¹⁰ It is no wonder, then, that the primary thrust of their work is militant Economism, the struggle to “add five kopeks onto the ruble.” The League is appealing to the labour aristocracy to struggle for the maintenance of its privileged position with respect to the lower strata of the Canadian proletariat and with respect to the toiling masses of the vast majority of mankind – the Third World – as well. By concentrating on the issues of wages, cutbacks, and layoffs, and calling this “communist agitation and propaganda”, the League is reducing agitation and propaganda to economic agitation and propaganda for trade-union

10 We can see this when we realize how narrow is the League’s vision of the Canadian working class. “Rare indeed are workers who have never participated in a strike at one time or another.” (*Forge*, no. 1, p. 2) Since only a minority of the Canadian workforce is organized into unions, and only a small minority of the most oppressed workers and of women workers, we can realize that the League has a very skewed vision of the working class – skewed in favour of the more privileged workers.

demands and not carrying out communist agitation and propaganda that diverts the economic struggle to the political struggle for state power. That can only be done by imparting to the working class a thorough knowledge of the imperialist system and the effect which its collapse is having on the proletariat.

The difference between the outlook of the labour aristocracy and that of the internationalist proletariat is that the labour aristocracy fights primarily in the realm of material incentives (as do the revisionists under the dictatorship of the proletariat) whereas the internationalist proletariat always situates these questions within the larger strategic questions of the revolutionary proletariat in the struggle for proletarian state power.

That is why a correct understanding of the right of colonies to self-determination is fundamentally supportive of the interests of the international working class. Stalin says: "... the path of the national liberation movement... cannot but lead to the crisis of world capitalism." (*Foundations of Leninism*, Peking, p. 77) Because national liberation struggles aggravate the crisis of capitalism, they bring the possibility of socialism that much closer to the proletariat in the oppressor nations and thus are welcomed by the conscious elements of the proletariat (even though this may be to their immediate material disadvantage).

By dealing heavy blows to imperialism in its rear area, by undermining its strength and narrowing down its sphere of domination, this movement aggravates the contradictions in the advanced

capitalist countries themselves, speeds up the progress of the revolutionary movement in them and makes it easier for the working class to overthrow capitalism. (*The Party of Labour of Albania in Battle With Modern Revisionism*, Tirana, pp. 369-70)

The aristocracy of labour, on the other hand, insists that the greatest service it can render the proletariat is to keep on struggling for the maintenance of its living standard under capitalism, as its primary approach to questions. We can see outstanding examples of this in the case of both the League and *In Struggle!*

At the same time, under the close surveillance of the 'Rules', patronage runs wild and all sorts of gadgets like Olympic keys, liquors, sweaters and even margarine are produced. But to balance the books, other big projects like James Bay are cut back, and the already reduced numbers of workers are forced into new speed-ups. (*The Forge*, no. 1, p. 7)

This is the way the League perceives the James Bay project.

To most of the people of Canada who have become aware of political issues, the words "James Bay" mean one thing: the genocide of the Native people. James Bay is a project in which the Canadian bourgeoisie and American imperialism collude to steal yet another part of the vast and lush resources of the North from the Native people,

pull the carpet from under their entire way of life, substitute starvation for fish and alcohol for furs, all in the interest of extracting raw materials and deriving superprofits.

Marxist-Leninists see social events from the point of view of the world proletarian revolution, and subordinate all questions of tactics to a broad understanding of the world imperialist system. The League, however, sees the James Bay project not from that point of view, not from the point of view that it is an aspect of Canadian imperialist conquest, but from the point of view of the jobs that it provides. Thus the labour aristocracy works to corrupt the proletariat and exhorts it to see the world as the bourgeoisie sees it. The bourgeoisie, too, defends Northern development on the grounds that it provides “jobs and wealth.” Says the Reed Paper Company to its employees:

Like people, all forests must die. They die by fire or flood, by insects or windstorms, from old age or by being cut down. Only in the last case does their death produce jobs and wealth. (*Dialogue*, organ of Reed Paper Company, November issue.)

Even the Indians, Reed tells its workers, will benefit from this wonderful blessing of wealth which Reed will confer on the working class by expanding into the North. But above all, Reed insists, we must be practical and not get moralistic or sentimental about the forest and the Indians.

But it's about time we approached development issues on the basis of prospective costs and benefits,

both short- and long-term. Then theatrical politicians and the media could give simplistic morality plays back to the producers of cowboy dramas. (*Ibid.*)

Marxist-Leninists, on the other hand, oppose imperialist expansion even when it produces “jobs and wealth”, because ultimately the capitalist system can offer the proletariat nothing but misery. The point of view of the labour aristocracy is to narrow the vision of the proletariat so that it sees things in ways that will benefit the upper stratum of the working-class – that is, in ways that are beneficial to imperialist expansion, rather than in any broader political understanding which would be grasped by the broad masses of the proletariat.

We will not speculate whether *The Forge* took this position supporting the construction of the James Bay project to provide jobs for workers because of ignorance and oversight, or as a conscious dismissal of the fundamental right of Native people to survive. It is easy for The Forge to write articles, as it did on March 25 (p. 9), wailing about the loss of Inuit “self-sufficiency”. But to what avail, when the League comes out and supports the James Bay project? And to what avail, if the League does not uphold the right of Native people to self-determination? To what avail if, when there becomes a contradiction between the right of Native people to survive and the immediate economic demands of a small section of the working class, the League sides with the latter?

We can predict that people may respond to our attack on the League by saying that it is inappropriate (“making non-antagonistic contradictions antagonistic”) to label them as seeking an alliance with the labour aristocracy by virtue of this one position taken in *The Forge*. We do this, however, because we are looking at it in the whole context of the League’s refusal to respond to the issues raised by the Native question since that group’s beginning. Not only have they persisted in their “annexationist indifference in practice”, an issue which they are well aware of, but they have moved beyond that by actively endorsing the annexation of Native Canada to imperialist interests. They have done this as a replacement of a response to the political questions raised by the issue of Native nationhood. In this respect, therefore, we feel that we are entirely justified in drawing the logical conclusions of their position. The same approach will guide our exposure of In Struggle’s support of imperialist annexation, as we will be showing.

The demand to withdraw the James Bay project is one of the most important democratic demands of Native people in Canada. The League has come out and defended a social-imperialist political line for the Canadian proletariat – and it all comes from their Economism, their refusal to take political questions seriously, their narrowing of their politics to the issues of reformist demands, their failure to place the questions concerning specific sectors of the working-class in the perspective of all political questions concerning the international communist movement.

Working-class consciousness cannot be genuine political consciousness unless the workers are trained to respond to all cases of tyranny, oppression, violence, and abuse, no matter what class is affected – unless they are trained, moreover, to respond from a Social-Democratic point of view and no other Those who concentrate the attention, observation, and consciousness of the working class exclusively, or even mainly, upon itself alone are not Social-Democrats; for the self-knowledge of the working class is indissolubly bound up ... with the practical understanding of the relationships between all the various classes of modern society, acquired through the experience of political life. For this reason, the conception of the economic struggle as the most widely applicable means of drawing the masses into the political movement, which our Economists preach, is so extremely HARMFUL AND REACTIONARY in its practical significance. (*What Is To Be Done?*, Peking, p. 86)

In Struggle

And, as goes Tweedledum, so goes Tweedledee. *In Struggle!* has recently come out with an entire article on the subject of the Canadian bourgeoisie in the North (a) without one word that this is Native territory, (b) endorsing the imperialist expansion of the Canadian bourgeoisie into Native Canada and (c) exhorting the Canadian proletariat to raise, as its principal demand in this respect, the maintenance of Canadian presence in

Native Canada. *In Struggle!* has thus joined the League in seeking an alliance with the top stratum of the working class, bribed by the superprofits of imperialism, by putting forward demands which call for the maintenance of the privileged position of that stratum without dealing with the fact that the loss of these privileges is a part of the world-wide collapse of imperialism.

The article, "The Closing of Canadian Gold Mines: Struggle Against Capitalist Anarchy!", appears in the November 24, 1976 issue of *In Struggle!* (p. 10). Its argument is that the bourgeoisie has entered Northern Canada in order to speculate with the price of metal on international markets. It explains that when the International Monetary Fund (an American-dominated organization) provoked a fall in the price of gold internationally a few months ago, Canadian mining concerns lost some money in their Canadian mines in the short term. But these concerns will continue to profit from the fall in metal prices internationally because they will be able to gain from the cheaper prices in South Africa and other parts of the Third World. Thus Noranda and other Canadian concerns have shut down Northern Canadian mines temporarily, waiting for a better price for gold within Northern Canada. In the meanwhile, they are waiting for subsidies from the Canadian state and they are laying off Canadian workers. But the article fails to situate the crisis in terms of the concrete situation of Native Canada; as such, the perspective which it takes is totally social-chauvinists.

“The capitalists come”, says *In Struggle!*, “as kings and masters in a new and promising mining region in order to draw out the natural resources in an anarchistic way.” *In Struggle!*, Nov. 24, 1976, p. 10.) What they should be doing of course (runs the implication), is “drawing out the natural resources” of Native people with a better sense of planning!

Actually, although anarchy marks the system of capitalist production as a whole, any given imperialist bourgeoisie while expanding into a colony often runs “development” there with an iron hand and allows precious little “anarchy”, since the monopolies strangle all attempts at competition. Says K. J. Rea, bourgeois scholar of the Canadian North:

[There are] various forms of adaptation used by private entrepreneurs to cope with the specific economic environment they encountered in the territorial north. In very general terms, these forms of adaptation were, first, a deliberate reliance by primary producers upon high-grade natural resource occurrences and, second, a persistent pursuit of efficiency through integration of enterprise both in primary production and in the related processing, supply, and general transportation operations.

...The general history of development in the area [the NWT]... reveals a persistent tendency toward integration of enterprise. This has taken both “horizontal” and “vertical” forms. It has been

horizontal in that there has been a tendency for one relatively large firm to “take over” the development of primary resources in a particular area. And it has been vertical in that firms initially organized to exploit a particular natural resource have tended to become involved either directly or through subsidiaries in a variety of other activities such as water control, transportation, electric power generation, fuel production, and forestry operations.

...In an almost totally undeveloped area where private concerns are interested in attempting to develop primary resources on an independent basis, the advantages of scale must be readily apparent. The chief reason for these advantages is the need for the resource-developing firm to provide, for its own use, whatever capital facilities are required by the nature of its operations and which are not provided publicly. Many of these facilities, such as those included under the term “infra-structure capital” (transportation devices and power systems, for example) and “social capital”, are known to be facilities the efficiency of which increases greatly with size. Small resource-developing firms consequently find it difficult, if not impossible, to equip themselves with such facilities because the market they themselves provide for the services of such facilities is too small to justify the investment that would be entailed in constructing reasonably efficient facilities of this sort. Consequently, when the discovery of rich land resources has attracted a

variety of entrepreneurs, large and small, to a remote area, it is inevitable that only the larger ones will succeed in establish in even the minimum facilities required to sustain their operation beyond the early development stage.¹¹

In Struggle! cannot understand this feature of the North because it is not willing to investigate the qualitative difference between the Canadian North and the Canadian South. And, cries *In Struggle!*, “there are only 2000 inhabitants left in this ghost town [Cobalt, Ont.] these days!” My, my, nasty Canadian bourgeoisie, neglecting its duties in “developing” “our” North!

In Struggle! criticizes the Canadian bourgeoisie for exploiting the Third World countries of South Africa and such areas for their metals, but conveniently fails to recognize that, in being squeezed out of their opportunities abroad, the Canadian bourgeoisie is turning around and engaging in exactly the same process in their search for raw materials in the North. The only thing *In Struggle!* finds to complain about this is that the crisis of imperialism is causing layoffs. It corrupts the proletariat to not see the crisis of imperialism in its positive light, in the light that this is hastening the crisis in capitalism and bringing about more quickly the revolutionary situation in Canada which alone can provide the chance for the liberation of the Canadian proletariat.

11 K. J. Rea, *The Political Economy of the Canadian North*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1968, p. 196-201

This is the difference between the outlook of the labour aristocracy and the outlook of the revolutionary proletariat. Thus *In Struggle!* takes the side of Northern development: "Force them to keep their factories and mines open!" And the demands? "What we expect from them (the union bureaucrats), is that they give us, the workers, the means to struggle for our jobs and our survival!"

In *Struggle!*'s Economist and right-opportunist line is revealed even more clearly here. We refer readers to "One Step Forward, Two Steps Back: The Political Leadership of *In Struggle!*" in this issue for a more thorough explanation of Economism. Basically Economism tries to represent the struggle for socialism as equivalent to the struggle for the maintenance of living standards and the increase of reforms within the capitalist system, by rarely making a concrete distinction between the two and by confusing the struggle for the one with the struggle for the other one. The function of this is to drag the proletariat back into the reform struggle, represent it as "revolutionary" and "the class struggle" challenging the rule of the bourgeoisie, and diverting the proletariat from the conscious struggle for its independent political power. We can see in the article under question that what *In Struggle!* is concretely demanding in the case of the North is that the union hacks "give us" the means to struggle rather than the workers taking the means to struggle in their own hands. It is a demand which calls the proletariat to remain enslaved to the bourgeoisie. And the struggle? "For our jobs and our survival." But our "jobs and our survival" are not linked directly to the overthrow of the

bourgeoisie and the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat in Canada. The article does not mention these things. What is mentioned is that “our jobs and our survival” are something that the union hacks will “give us.” And how are our “jobs and our survival” going to be realized? Through socialism, a new economic order? No, our “survival” is a function of keeping our jobs under capitalism. That is why Economists are so insistent that those who fight for “socialism” must have working-class jobs. How can we fight for “socialism” (i.e., for our “jobs and our survival”) if we are not employed in working-class jobs? And, continues *In Struggle!*, “What we are expecting from union leaders are meetings to struggle against layoffs!” *In Struggle!* is bringing the line to the proletariat that it should “expect” things from the bourgeoisie. Come on, union leaders, you haven’t been doing your jobs at helping us live decently under capitalism! And, of course, “the comrades of *In Struggle!*...can really lend us a hand in the struggle!” *In Struggle!* is therefore functioning as the “bourgeois politician” of which Lenin spoke when he said:

It is the task of the bourgeois politician “to assist the economic struggle of the proletariat”; the task of the socialist is to bring the economic struggle to further the socialist movement and the success of the revolutionary working-class party. The task of the socialist is to further the indissoluble fusion of the economic and the political struggle into the single class struggle of the socialist working-class masses. (“Apropos of the Profession de Foi” LCW 4:294)

But, *In Struggle!*'s defenders may howl in protest, *In Struggle!* is not Economist! Do we not read to the end of their articles where they never fail to “mention” the Party and socialism? And “mention” it is exactly what they do. Stalin says: “To a reformist, reforms are everything, while revolutionary work is something incidental, something just to talk about, mere eyewash.” (*Foundations of Leninism*, Peking, p. 98) This is how *In Struggle!* “mentions” the Party and socialism at the very end of the article:

Force our unions to struggle against mines and factories shutdowns! Get involved with the comrades of *In Struggle!*: they can really lend us a hand in the struggle! AT THE SAME TIME let's get involved in the struggle for the building of our Proletarian Party and the victory of true socialism!

Many are the opportunists who will tell us that the final sentence absolves *In Struggle!* for all time against any tinge of Economism, reformism and liquidationism. But we like to look beyond the surface of things, and we think otherwise.

In Struggle! tells us in the last sentence that “at the same time” as supporting imperialism and the annexation of Native Canada to imperialist interests, “at the same time” as we focus the attention of the proletariat exclusively on its own narrow trade-unionist demands, we are supposed to “get involved” in the struggle for the party. First of all, what kind of “party” could *In Struggle!* be trying to build, if this is the political line which it wants this “party” to carry?

And, secondly, *In Struggle!* here is specifically denying that building the party is the principal task. It is represented as a task at best simultaneous with the task of asking the union hacks to “give us” the means to struggle for “jobs and our survival.” The party is the principal task, it seems, only for the intelligentsia. For the workers, they are supposed to struggle for their imperialist Economism four days a week and the party three days a week.

“And,” concludes the article in the worst insult to the Canadian proletariat yet, “the victory of true socialism!” True socialism, the haven for the proletariat wherein the mines in the north are made safer for the working class and there are no layoffs. True socialism, wherein the bourgeoisie’s tasks of expanding into the North, replacing “anarchy” with “planning”, and wiping out Canada’s Native people are made smoother and less prone to creating dissension. We strongly suspect that the bourgeoisie will be very supportive of *In Struggle!*’s plans for “true socialism” in the Canadian North.

What would people say if the League had endorsed the expansion of Canadian companies into Mexico on the grounds that it would provide “jobs for workers, including Mexican workers”? What would people say if *In Struggle!* had supported Canadian imperialist invasion into Guatemala, or Namibia, and put forward that Canadian workers employed there should “fight to keep the factories open” and “make the union bosses meet with us to struggle against layoffs”? These groups would not dare to champion the bourgeoisie in that fashion. But when it is the people

of Native Canada who are at stake, such politics are “perfectly acceptable” in newspapers which claim to represent the fundamental interests of the working class. Thus we can see what social-chauvinist double-standards they are applying in order to struggle for the maintenance of their class position in Canada. What is our Marxist-Leninist movement worth if it does not take up the bitterest forms of struggle against this two-faced racism?

The original authors of “Nationhood or Genocide” were sharply criticized by both the Toronto Communist Group and Workers’ Unity (Toronto) for having said, in the first draft of that article, that the opportunists in the movement were avoiding the Native question because they were “viewing with desire the lush resources of the North.” These groups were appalled that we could even think in such language. But, as we have shown, that is exactly what both *In Struggle!* and the League are doing. This is the form, concretely, that such “viewing with desire” takes among those who seek alliance with the labour aristocracy. We hope now that the TCG and Workers’ Unity (which have now respectively rallied to *In Struggle!* and the League) are now satisfied with the substantiation we have given to our point.

What we have shown here is not just that the League and *In Struggle!* have failed to break with the labour aristocracy and have instead been actively seeking an alliance with it. We have shown the converse as well: that, as we deal with in detail in “Not With Whom To Go, But Where To Go”, it is by embracing the Native question in its fullest implications that the revolutionary proletariat in

Canada will be able to concretely “break with the top stratum of workers who are infected with imperialism” (“Draft (or Theses) of the R.C.P.’s Reply to the Letter of the Independent Social-Democratic Party of Germany”, LCW 30:343) by “touch(ing) upon what is most important, basic, significant and closely connected with practice – one’s attitude to the nation that is oppressed by “one’s own” nation.” (“The Discussion of Self-Determination Summed Up”, LCW 22:359-60)

Thus the Native question, aside from all of its importance in its own right as a national question and as a defense of the liberation of an oppressed people, is principal for the Canadian proletariat because of its immediacy in the task of identifying the interests of the labour aristocracy in Canada which pays “lip-service to revolutionary aims and revolutionary tactics.” (“Opportunism and the Collapse of the Second International,” LCW 22:111)

From the Economist world-view, the working-class is not capable of grasping political questions, of relating their economic demands to the broader political issues, and therefore perhaps even of subordinating their immediate economic interests to “politics in command.” Economism assumes that, by definition, the immediate economic interests of any given sector of the proletariat are in harmony with the defense of the fundamental interests of the entire working class – a political line which certainly was smashed in the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, if not many years before. The proletarian struggle often involves a great deal of self-sacrifice – and Economism does this opposite of preparing the proletariat for this. The

James Bay project is an excellent case in point. The political line which Communists should be taking to workers in the James Bay project – and in the northern mines, and in the pipeline projects, and in the Dryden chemical plant in Ontario – is that the workers should take up struggle against the activities of their employers in exploiting and destroying Native people, because the exploitation and destruction of the Native people is detrimental to the fundamental interests of the proletariat. And, how surprised our Economist friends will be to find that there will be advanced workers in Northern Canada sympathetic to this point of view and who will rally to the defense of the right of Native people to self-determination! Workers can grasp politics, even when the political education is not tacked on the end of sermons about the higher paycheque!¹²

But what we must understand is that it is not that Economism fears that workers cannot grasp political questions; Economism fears the workers grasping political questions. Economism is the ideology in the workers' movement whose principal struggle – in fact, whose entire strategy for revolution – is the defense of the immediate interests of the working class from erosion by the collapse

12 We note in this connection that the union in Dryden, Ontario is opposing the expansion of Reed Paper Company into 18,000 square miles of Native territory without settling Native land claims and objections to the project. To be sure it is not engaging in communist activity, but we consider this progressive. Thus the League and *In Struggle!* are lagging behind some of the progressive trade-unionist politics which exist in Canada!

of the world imperialist system; therefore Economism is the carrier of social-chauvinism to the working class.¹³

It is perfectly obvious that social-chauvinism's basic ideological and political content fully coincides with the foundations of opportunism. It is one and the same tendency. ("The Collapse of the Second International", LCW 21:242)

Another good example of this narrowness and myopia is contained in the Toronto Communist Group's critique of the first draft of "Nationhood or Genocide", when they criticized it for:

substitution of a moral for a scientific basis to Marxism-Leninism – by arguing that it is in the interests of the proletariat (materially) to maintain the colonization of native people and to view with desire the lush territories of the native colonies. We are left with the proposition that the proletariat must support a struggle which is against their interests, for moral reasons. A good basis for Christianity, perhaps, but the only morality the proletariat knows is the defense of its own interests

13 We are not arguing, of course, that Communists should not support militant trade union demands of workers against attacks by the bourgeoisie. We do support the struggle against the Trudeau law and all other struggles of the proletariat against the attacks which the bourgeoisie mounts against it. What we struggle against is the Economist practice of raising these struggles to the principal level and viewing them as revolutionary struggles.

– the liberation of humanity. (“The Whole Is Equal to the Sum of Its Parts”, p. 34)

In other words, by defending the immediate bread-and-butter interests of any particular segment of the working class, the proletariat automatically defends the liberation of humanity. Thus Economism is defended on the grounds that it always works toward the proletarian revolution in its own way (“the defense of its own interests = the liberation of humanity”) Therefore the purity of the aristocracy of labour is defended, since it could never, ever, be fighting for something which contradicts the fundamental interests of the proletariat.

Lenin called this kind of opportunist thinking counterrevolutionary.

... Then Crispian went on to speak of high wages. The position in Germany, he said, is that the workers are quite well off compared with the workers in Russia or in general, in the East of Europe. A revolution, as he sees it, can be made only if it does not worsen the workers’ condition “too much”. Is it permissible, in a Communist Party, to speak in a tone like this, I ask? This is the language of counter-revolution. The standard of living in Russia is undoubtedly lower than in Germany, and when we established the dictatorship, this led to the workers beginning to go more hungry and to their conditions becoming even worse. The workers’ victory cannot be achieved without sacrifices, without a temporary

deterioration of their conditions. We must tell the workers the very opposite of what Crispian has said. If, in desiring to prepare the workers for the dictatorship, one tells them that their conditions will not be worsened “too much”, one is losing sight of the main thing, namely, that it was by helping their “own” bourgeoisie to conquer and strangle the whole world by imperialist methods, with the aim of thereby ensuring better pay for themselves, that the labour aristocracy developed. If the German workers now want to work for the revolution they must make sacrifices, and not be afraid to do so.... To tell the workers in the handful of rich countries where life is easier, thanks to imperialist privilege, that they must be afraid of “too great” impoverishment, is counter-revolutionary. It is the reverse that they should be told. The labour aristocracy that is afraid of sacrifices, afraid of “too great” impoverishment during the revolutionary struggle, cannot belong to the Party. Otherwise the dictatorship is impossible, especially in West-European countries. (“Speech on Terms of Admission to the Comintern”, LCW 31:248)

Not only do the League and *In Struggle!* fail to tell the workers that “the workers’ victory cannot be achieved without sacrifices, without a temporary deterioration of their conditions”; these groups have been exhorting the proletariat to follow the line that the maintenance of their living standards in an imperialist country is principal in preparing themselves for the dictatorship of the

proletariat. Objectively, they have been making this struggle their strategy for revolution and their programme for revolution, even when this involves struggling to annex the North and further exploit the Native people of Canada to accomplish this!

The "National Minority" Line – A Cover For Imperialism

When “Nationhood or Genocide” was first submitted to Canadian Revolution as a first draft, one of the criticisms made by people within the coalition was that we should not be attacking a “national minority” line because no one held that line publicly. But the fact was that many groups and individuals with whom we had talked – including people within the journal coalition – had taken the “national minority” position; they had just never committed themselves to it in writing because they thought the Native question to be of secondary importance.

The “national minority” line for Native people is the line of opportunism, revisionism, trotskyism and the bourgeoisie. It is objectively the only alternative to the line that Native people have the right to self-determination. It was only inevitable that when the Marxist-Leninist line was put forward in our movement, the bourgeois line would surface inside of the movement – and it has.

In Struggle! has recently come out and stated that Native people are a “national minority.” They have not only put this forward as their own position; they have actually sought to define it as the position of the entire Marxist-

Leninist movement.¹⁴ Remember, this is our great liberal mother hen, with her all-embracing definition of the movement which could be “used to unite anybody .”(See “Not With Whom To Go, But Where To Go,” LD no. 2.)

Let us review some of the history of *In Struggle!*'s position on this question. On October 26, 1974, *In Struggle!* carried an article on the Native question which specifically took the position that Native people were victims of imperialism and as such had the same right to self-determination that other Third World peoples did. In Canadian Revolution 1:1, they said that Native people were a national minority but that they had the right to self-determination as Quebec did. We noted in “Nationhood or Genocide” that this was a muddled position but that the principal issue was upheld.

For a long time *In Struggle!* was publicly silent on the Native question. They told us that they had withdrawn

14 “In practice, the Canadian Marxist-Leninist movement recognizes that in our country the struggle for socialism must pass through the overthrow of State power held by the Canadian bourgeoisie, and this struggle must be carried out principally by the Canadian proletariat led by its ML communist Party. It upholds the self-determination of the Quebec nation, up to and including its right to secede, as well as the national minority rights of the Inuits and Native Indians. Women of the people fight their oppression by completely associating themselves with the revolutionary struggle.” (*In Struggle!*, Sept. 16, 1976, p. 4 Supplement.) At three different workshops at the conference on October 2 in Toronto, cadre from *In Struggle!* were asked if this meant that those recognizing Native nationhood were, according to them, outside of the Marxist-Leninist movement. At each workshop the question was evaded.

their earlier statements on the subject and that they now did not have a position. But they declined to discuss the questions of concrete analysis, or even the question of the right to secede, and instead essentially limited discussion to what to them was the burning question of the day: a single party for all of Canada. This is reflected in their documents.

in order to reach this solution, there is no other means than to struggle right away for the building of the Canadian party of the proletariat, a single party at Canada's scale, a Party that will be capable to unify the just struggle of the Canadian people in order to get rid of this system of oppression and exploitation. (*In Struggle!*, March 18, 1976, p. 2)

There can be only one party in a given country, otherwise the development of the revolutionary struggle is endangered by divisions among the proletariat. . . . (Proletarian Unity no. 1, pp. 18-19)

In Struggle!, then, is putting the question of the single party to the forefront when they have been unwilling to discuss the Native question in terms of concrete analysis or in terms of the right to secede.¹⁵ We will be dealing with the question of why they are seeing things this way, but first we note that they never held this position in regard to the question of Quebec.

15 Canadian Revolution has done the same thing. See LD no. 1, p. 21.

But, national oppression of the Quebec nation means mainly the denial of their right of self-determination, political separation from the oppressor nation, English Canada. All Canadian workers must recognize Quebec's right of self-determination. (*In Struggle!*, June 24, 1976, p. 3)

Now, if "national oppression" of Quebec is summed up in the denial of the right of self-determination, then why is "national oppression" of Native people not likewise summed up in the denial of their right to self-determination? And, if there is to be "one party at Canada's scale", can that party be built on a basis which does not recognize the right of the people of Native Canada to self-determination? Would *In Struggle!* unite with people in a Communist Party who denied the right of Quebec to self-determination? We further read that the members of the NDP are "so-called socialists" because they reject the right of Quebec to self-determination. (Ibid.) Are we supposed to join in one party with the "so-called socialists" of *In Struggle!* who deny the same right to Native people?

What must be brought out here is that *In Struggle!* has taken such a chauvinist position on the Native question that it does not even think it important to defend this position. They merely state it as if it were obvious and a given. That practice is a good summary not only of their chauvinism but also of their general right-opportunism and their simple arrogance. Right-opportunism, because it is right-opportunism which holds the role of Marxist-Leninist theory in contempt and finds it "intellectualism"

to engage in serious debate over political line, putting it back-seat to the immediate narrow demands of a divided working class. Are they after cheap popularity? And arrogance, to think that it is their right to put forward a position to the proletariat on this controversial subject without the smallest attempt to defend it. They are *In Struggle!*, after all. Why should they have to defend their politics?

In Struggle! takes the clear position that Canada is an imperialist country – although, unlike the League, they are clear that the Canadian bourgeoisie colludes with American imperialism in the exploitation of Canada. But here again, like the League, *In Struggle!* does not take the role of science seriously enough to pursue the immediate strategic implications of this position. If Canada is imperialist, where is its primary resource area? And what does that mean in the strategy to undermine Canadian imperialism and intensify the contradictions between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie? Here again is a consequence of their Economism, which is reluctant to admit that Third World struggles undermine imperialism because it is reluctant to come to terms with the fact that the proletariat may fundamentally gain from circumstances which may threaten its living standard under capitalism!

In Struggle's chauvinism and its contempt for Marxism-Leninism is even more disgusting when we see that *In Struggle!*, unlike the League, openly acknowledges that the activities of the Canadian bourgeoisie in the north constitute Canadian imperialism.

The example of the Cree Indians is only one amongst others, of the degradation, the crushing, the killing of a people in the name of the glory of imperialism. (*In Struggle!*, August 5, 1976, p. 7)

Now, if Canada's Native people have been killed by imperialism, then whose imperialism has this been? Given *In Struggle's* line on the Canadian bourgeoisie, surely they would not seek to deny that the Canadian bourgeoisie would collude with American imperialism in its ventures into the North. And further, we read in their newspaper that this imperialism has "expelled" (Native people) "from their land to make place for dams, oil and paper companies" (August 19, 1976, p. 1) Is the expulsion of a people from their land to extract primary resources not imperialism? What in Marxism-Leninism could be more fundamental? And so we here have *In Struggle!* putting forward a position that a people exploited and killed by imperialism does not have the right to self-determination! And this without one sentence of explanation!

This is brought into an even worse light when we read the following discourse on the subject of Canadian imperialism.

We have to give particular support to the peoples who are fighting against Canadian imperialism (Haiti, South Africa, South America, Jamaica), even if those struggles are not the most bitter in the world. These struggles not only help to weaken the Canadian imperialist bourgeoisie, but also

allow us to develop, through propaganda, the internationalist consciousness among the Canadian working class.

We must use every means possible to denounce social-imperialism and the hidden role it plays in sabotaging anti-imperialist struggles.... We must wage the struggle against the opportunist support of Canadian social-democrats and revisionists to Third World peoples. (*Digest*, special issue, p. 13)

An excellent article, this. How we agree that the Canadian proletariat must focus its attention on the victims of Canadian imperialism particularly! How we agree that to struggle on these questions deepens the internationalist consciousness among the Canadian working class, and how we agree indeed that the support of our “social-democrat” and “revisionist” “friends” is opportunist indeed if it merely prattles about democratic rights but fails to raise the right to self-determination, up to and including secession! How we agree that this is “social-imperialism”, “sabotaging anti-imperialist struggles!”

What is more, *In Struggle!* has given us a fine example of “annexationist indifference in practice” when it has published an entire supplement on the national question which deals only with Quebec and not with Native Canada.¹⁶ This again is an example of their willingness to shield the working class from the burning political issues which confront us in Canada.

16 Pamphlet no. 20.

The Question of One Party in Canada

We read in this supplement a very fine defense of the necessity to recognize the right of oppressed nations to secede. And we read a position put forward by Stalin as follows:

We still have to settle the question of how to organize the proletariat of the various nations into a single, common party. One plan is that the workers should be organized on national lines – so many nations, so many parties. That plan was rejected by the Social-Democrats. Experience has shown that the organization of the proletariat of a given state on national lines tends only to destroy the idea of class solidarity. All the proletarians of all the nations in a given state must be organized in a single, indivisible proletarian collective. (“The Seventh [April] Conference of the RSDLP(B),” Joseph Stalin: Selected Works, p. 97.)

We are sincerely appreciative that *In Struggle!* has brought this statement by Stalin, and this article, to our attention. We will therefore give it close examination.

This position by Stalin comes at the end of a longer article which systematically traces the steps to be considered in the resolution of the national question. The first step, according to Stalin, is that the right of oppressed nations to secede must be recognized. Stalin says: “When we put forward the principle that peoples have the right to self-determination we thereby raise the struggle against national oppression to the level of a struggle against imperialism, our common enemy. If we fail to do this, we

may find ourselves in the position of bringing grist to the mill of the imperialists.” (Ibid., p. 95)

Then, however, Stalin deals with the question of secession itself – whether proletarians advocate secession or not. Stalin is absolutely clear that there is no dogmatic answer to this question.

This latter question must be settled quite separately by the party of the proletariat in each particular case, according to the circumstances.... Thus we are at liberty to agitate for or against secession in accordance with the interests of the proletariat, of the proletarian revolution. Hence, the question of secession must be determined in each particular case independently, in accordance with the existing situation, and, for this reason, recognizing the right of secession must not be confused with the expediency of secession in any given circumstances. (Ibid., pp. 95-6)

Stalin then goes on to deal with those peoples who, having been granted the right of secession, have chosen of their own will to remain in the boundaries of a given state. It is only then that Stalin goes into the question of organizing the proletariat of the various nations into a single party.

We recognize that *In Struggle!*, in making this citation from Stalin, was not talking about the Native question. We wouldn't expect our comrades from *In Struggle!* to go to such trouble as that. But the implications for the Native

question are there, and so we must understand them in terms of this article by Stalin.

The primary obligation of the proletarian party is to uphold the right of oppressed nations to secede. Without this, the other questions are rendered meaningless. Once that right has been upheld, it is not a given that the proletariat agitates against secession. This must be decided on the basis of concrete conditions – and no one in our movement has yet made a concrete analysis which can answer this question. Certainly not *In Struggle!* or the League. Yet, we find both groups calling for a common struggle of Native and non-Native people in Canada, independent of any concrete analysis. This is hardly the kind of practice which Stalin was defending.

Stalin's position that all nations in a state should group themselves into one party is obviously predicated on the assumption that we are dealing with one state. It relates to those nations which have committed themselves to remaining within the boundaries of the oppressor nation. Clearly the proletariat cannot seize power and build socialism in one country with several political parties.

What has not yet been determined is if Native Canada will become a part of the same state as English and French Canada, or if it will choose to secede – or if it should secede. These questions have not been touched on in our movement. Not even the right to secede has been touched on by any but a small number of people. The question of “one party, one state” at this stage in the Native question is pure diversion.

Finally, we remind comrades that Marx actually advocated secession for Ireland.

...It is in the direct and absolute interest of the English working class to get rid of their present connection with Ireland. And this is my fullest conviction, and for reasons which in part I can not tell the English workers themselves For a long time I believed that it would be possible to overthrow the Irish regime by English working-class ascendancy. I always expressed this point of view in the New York Tribune. Deeper study has now convinced me of the opposite. The English working class will never accomplish anything until it has got rid of Ireland. The lever must be applied in Ireland. That is why the Irish question is so important for the social movement in general. (Letter to Engels, December 10, 1869, in *Selected Correspondence*, Moscow 1965, p. 232)

And Lenin replies with an observation that could probably not better fit our movement: “The clever L.VI. would probably have berated poor Marx for forgetting about the class struggle!” (“The Right of Nations to Self-Determination”, LCW 20:440)

Lenin further explains:

Marx did not make an Absolute of the national movement knowing, as he did, that only the victory of the working class can bring about the complete

liberation of all nationalities. It is impossible to estimate beforehand all the possible relations between the bourgeois liberation movements of the oppressed nations and the proletarian emancipation movement of the oppressor nation.

... Marx advocated the separation of Ireland from England, “although after the separation there may come federation”.

What were the theoretical grounds for Marx’s conclusion? In England the bourgeois revolution had been consummated long ago. But it had not yet been consummated in Ireland; it is being consummated only now, after the lapse of half a century, by the reforms of the English liberals.

... It serves as a warning against that “servile haste” with which the philistines of all countries, colours and languages hurry to label as “Utopian” the idea of altering the frontiers of states that were established by the violence and privileges of the landlords and bourgeoisie of one nation.

If the Irish and English proletariat had not accepted Marx’s policy and had not made the secession of Ireland their slogan, this would have been the worst sort of opportunism, a neglect of their duties as democrats and socialists, and a concession to English reaction and the English bourgeoisie. (Ibid., pp. 440-42)

So much for the dogmatist insistence that Native Canada must join in one party with the rest of the Canadian proletariat, even before the movement has upheld their right to secede and even before the movement offers a concrete analysis to substantiate its case.

The League Attempts to Hide Its Alliance with Imperialism

Returning to the CCL(ML), we see that the League claims that it does not have a line on the Native question. Workers' Unity (Toronto), in "rallying" to the League, tells us in all their magnanimity that "these questions require serious study and investigation by the Marxist-Leninist movement." ("Workers' Unity (Toronto) Rallies to the Canadian Communist League (ML)", *Canadian Revolution* 1:6, p. 36) Yet the League tells us that "we already have defined the essential elements of the political line... we still have an immense task of ELABORATING them into a program." (Forge no. 14, p. 11) Thus we learn that the Native question is not an essential element to the political line, and at best is part of an "elaboration" of the essentials. Is this not a line on the Native question? We learn too that "Canada is a multinational bourgeois state, made up of two nations: the oppressor English-Canadian nation, and the oppressed Quebec nation." (Forge no. 2, p. 13) But oh, no! no line on the Native question! And, like *In Struggle!*, the League is careful to point out that to deny the right of self-determination to Quebec is "great-nation chauvinism" and that we must "fight against all those who would liquidate this fundamental question of the socialist revolution." (Forge, no. 2, p. 13) But as to

liquidating the Native question by never confronting it, never struggling over it – why must we not “fight against all those”? And further, the League maintains that “Canadian imperialism possesses no colonies.” (Forge, no. 8, p. 12) A line, again, on the Native question! And, at their forum on the two superpowers in Toronto, the League showed two maps of the world: one featuring the world’s colonies, and one showing what constituted the Third World. Native Canada was included in neither of these. Now, if Canada has no colonies, and if the North is not a part of the Third World, and if Canada has two nations, and if the Native question is not an essential question of political line, then what else is the League saying but that Native people in Canada are a national minority (which should all rally behind the James Bay project because it creates “jobs”)?!

What the League puts forward in their demands for Native people is the “simple justice” of “full democratic rights.” (Forge, no. 7, p. 9) This is exactly the line of the trotskyites, the revisionists, and the Bainsite neo-revisionists.

The oppression of the Indian, Metis and Inuit (Eskimo) peoples is a continuing disgrace to Canada and must be abolished and they must have full political equality, including the right to decide on all matters relating to their distinctive development. (*The Road to Socialism in Canada: The Program of the Communist Party of Canada*, p. 24)

Any revisionist or trotskyite can demand “simple” “democratic rights” within the structure of reforms possible under capitalism. The question is, what is the League’s revolutionary line for Native people in Canada? It appears that it is about as “revolutionary” as its reformist line for the Canadian proletariat. (See “Right Opportunism is Dead! Long Live Right Opportunism!”)

The League also indignantly refers to the attempt by the two superpowers to carve up the Canadian North as an encroachment on “our islands in the Arctic.” (Forge, no. 13, p. 4)

This territory belongs to Canada, but up to date the Canadian state has been more than tolerant of the manoeuvres of these two pirating powers. The superpowers must get out of the Canadian Arctic! It is up to the working class to take the leadership of the Canadian people in defence of Canada’s territorial integrity and in fighting threats to our independence. (Ibid.)¹⁷

Now, as we move from the League’s demands for “simple” “democratic rights” for Native people and learn how the League puts this in the framework of the overall

17 We note here that the League’s obstinance on the subject of the principal contradiction comes to the fore too. The Canadian state has taken the weakest of initiatives in struggling against the encroachment of American imperialism in the Arctic; but we do remember, that really, American imperialism can only “influence” the Canadian economy and that it is “anti-Marxist” to say that it can have control over the Canadian state! Maybe American imperialism is gifted with psychic powers to influence Trudeau and his henchmen to carry out their wishes!

proletarian revolution, their social-chauvinism becomes more clearly defined. Canada's North is "ours", as opposed to the Native peoples.' And who must lead the struggle for the independence of the North? The Canadian working class as a whole. This is classical social-chauvinism, saying that leadership of colonial struggles against imperialism should be led by the proletariat of the advanced capitalist countries.

The Open Letter of the Central Committee of the CPSU . . . (asserts) that the national liberation movement should be "led" by the socialist countries and the working-class movement in the metropolitan countries. It has the audacity to claim that this is "based" on Lenin's views on proletarian leadership. (*Apologists of Neo-Colonialism*, Peking 1963, p. 32)

The Question of One Revolution

What is asserted by the League and *In Struggle!*, and by other groups in the movement as well¹⁸, is that the liberation of Native people will happen only through proletarian revolution. This is of course true – it is a position which we have taken as well. (Canadian Revolution 1:4, p. 56, col. 1) The liberation of no people happens by any other path but proletarian revolution; as Communists we know this.

18 See, for example, Contribution a la creation du parti ouvrier revolutionnaire by the Groupe pour la revolution proletarienne. This is the sum total of their line on the Native question.

The important point to grasp here is that we must not fall into the trotskyite social-imperialist arrogance which denies the progressive character of the anti-imperialist struggles of the Third World. As Marxist-Leninists, this is the principle which we must uphold in contradistinction to the counter revolutionary ideologies of revisionism, neo-revisionism, and trotskyism which give feed to the role of imperialism and the superpowers in the world by denying the role which the Third World plays in undermining them. Just as we cannot call for one party which does not uphold the right of Native Canada to secede, so we cannot call for “one proletarian revolution” in Canada without an analysis of what Canada consists of, how many nations are retained within its borders and what the character of those nations is. And, with that goes the understanding that, as a Third World nation and as a colony with a very small proletariat (as was true in Vietnam and China), Native Canada may achieve its liberation in a different fashion than will English and French Canada – e.g., by engaging in a bourgeois-democratic struggle for national liberation and then passing to the second stage, the stage of proletarian revolution. This may or may not involve secession. To understand this is to put forward a concrete revolutionary understanding of the Native question.

To evade this entire issue is, once again, to deny the role of science in the struggle to build the party, to skim over questions of strategy and the party programme and simply recite our dogmas in order to recruit some followers. It is anything but the practice of Marxism-Leninism.

Conclusion: Imperialist Economism: The Politics of Both *In Struggle!* and the League

Both the League and *In Struggle!* have turned their backs on the entire debate about whether or not Native people constitute a nation. Both argue that Canada is an imperialist country; yet neither has shown any interest in carrying this fact through to its implications. The ignoring of the question by both groups is a part of the same brand of opportunism, which Lenin summarized as “imperialist Economism” – the welding of Economism with the social-chauvinism which is bred by the corruption of the upper stratum of the labour movement by the superprofits of imperialism.

Capitalism has triumphed – therefore there is no need to bother with political problems, the old Economists reasoned in 1894-1901, falling into rejection of the political struggle in Russia. Imperialism has triumphed – therefore there is no need to bother with the problems of political democracy, reason the present-day imperialist Economists. (“A Caricature of Marxism and Imperialist Economism”, LCW 23:29)

It is consistent that both groups, in failing to take up political struggles in the movement, should fail to undertake the struggle about the Native question. It is consistent that both groups, in putting questions of immediate economic demands to the forefront, should liquidate the political issues which are raised confronting all classes and segments of Canadian society. It is consistent that both groups, in cultivating a following

among the more privileged strata of the working class, should regard the struggle for economic gains as paramount and ignore the social-chauvinist implications that this Economism entails. It is consistent that both groups, in belittling the role of ideology and the importance of the party programme, should deny the struggle to enlighten the proletariat on political questions and should instead fight to keep the class in the dark by worshipping the spontaneous movement, which is guided by the politics of the bourgeoisie.

We can see, then, why both groups call for a single proletarian party throughout Canada without first raising the demand of Native people for self-determination; and, as well, we can see why both groups insist that the struggle of Native people must be subordinated to the “class struggle” of the Canadian proletariat for a maintenance of its living standard under capitalism. Both groups, as we have been showing in all other areas of their political line, are striving for their own hegemony over the movement of the masses in Canada. Since this is the case, it follows that they must also seek hegemony over the struggles of the Native peoples. This is the way the aristocracy of labour behaves in the labour movement: it seeks to bring that movement under its wing and organize the entire working class to fight for its (the labour aristocracy’s) own interests as a privileged upper stratum.

The Marxist-Leninist movement largely consists of petit-bourgeois elements who themselves are becoming conscious that they are being drawn into the working class as capitalism collapses. There are two major segments to

this movement. The first consists of those who are authentically striving to develop a scientific programme for revolution in order to offer to the proletariat the political knowledge of scientific socialism. These people are therefore putting the question of struggle over political line, up to the point of elaborating a concrete programme for proletarian revolution in Canada, to the forefront and oppose all attempts to minimize or squelch that struggle by means of opportunist initiatives. The other segment, which we have concluded is in the majority in the Marxist-Leninist movement, consists of those elements who, as they are threatened with proletarianization, seek hegemony over the proletarian struggle.¹⁹ These people are contented to unite on a basis which underplays the role of science, the theory of the Canadian revolution (i.e., the party programme), and the struggle to defeat opportunism, resent those who rock the boat by rejecting the opportunism of both *In Struggle!* and the League, avoid debate over political issues, and put the economic struggle to the forefront and seek to lead it. We have seen in this article that this two-line struggle comes home to roost in the Native question.

Thus it is with the Native question that we in our movement in Canada can concretely see the effects of the bribed upper stratum of the labour aristocracy in our movement. We can see how their politics have corrupted our entire movement, and are paralyzing it in its struggle to determine a correct strategy for revolution. The

19 See Section 4 of "Not With Whom To Go, But Where To Go" in LD no. 2, for an explanation of why we consider opportunism to be a majority in the Marxist-Leninist movement.

principal interest of the opportunists in our movement is in militant Economism so that they can seek their hegemony over the vast majority of the proletariat. They do not have a particular interest in struggling to develop a strategy for revolution in Canada because a socialist revolution is not particularly what they are looking toward.

And, as the labour aristocracy has so deeply corrupted our movement, it is in breaking with the labour aristocracy that we will be able to set our movement on the correct path to proletarian revolution. The Native question, because of its immediacy in the question of making a revolution within Canada, is key in the formulation of a revolutionary strategy, including – as we have mentioned – in the area of the struggle against both superpowers. For that reason, the labour aristocracy cannot face it, because in facing it that stratum would expose itself for what it is: that stratum which is seeking an alliance with its “own” bourgeoisie and standing in the way of proletarian revolution in Canada. And that is why the League and *In Struggle!* will not respond to the Native question, and that is why they seek to ignore it and want instead to get on with the task of “making October 14 a real general strike against the wage controls”, pretending that socialism will emerge out of this defensive kind of struggle.

But, in contrast, those truly dedicated to making a proletarian revolution in Canada will understand the importance of Lenin’s words when he said:

The proletariat cannot evade the question that is particularly “unpleasant” for the imperialist bourgeoisie, namely, the question of the frontiers of a state that is based on national oppression.... The proletariat must demand the right of political secession for the colonies and for the nations that “its own” nation oppresses. Until it does this, proletarian internationalism will remain a meaningless phrase; mutual confidence and class solidarity between the workers of the oppressing and oppressed nations will become impossible; the hypocrisy of the reformist and Kautskyian advocates of self-determination who maintain silence about the nations which are oppressed by “their” state will remain unexposed. (*Lenin on the National and Colonial Questions*, Peking, pp. 7-8)