

Section 3

Moscow takes command: 1929–1937

The documents in this section cover the period from February 1929 until early 1937, with most of them being concentrated in the earlier years of this period in line with the general distribution of documents in the CAAL. This period marks an important shift in the history of relations between the CPA and the Comintern for two main reasons. First, because the Comintern became a direct player in the leadership struggles within the Party in 1929 (the main catalyst for which, not surprisingly, was the CPA's long-troubled approach to the issue of the ALP). And second, because it sent an organizer to Australia to 'Bolshevize' the Party in 1930–31. A new generation of leaders took over from the old, owing their positions to Moscow's patronage, and thus—until the Party was declared an illegal organization in 1940—fully compliant with the policies and wishes of Moscow. The shift in relations just outlined was part of a broader pattern in the Comintern's dealings with its sections that began after the Sixth Congress in 1928. If the 'Third Period' thesis was correct, and the world class struggle was about to intensify, and the Soviet Union to come under military attack (and, indeed, the thesis was partly correct, but partly self-fulfilling), then the Comintern needed sections that could reliably implement its policies. The Sixth Congress had been quite open about it: it now required from its national sections a 'strict party discipline and prompt and precise execution of the decisions of the Communist International, of its agencies and of the leading Party committees' (Degras 1960, 466).

In Comintern parlance, the period covered here encompasses two historical phases: the 'Third Period' of heightened capitalist crises and imperialist wars (and military threats against the USSR); and, after the political victory of the Nazis in Germany in 1933, the period of the cross-class 'Popular Front', with communists desperate to support alliances, front organizations, and governments that would prevent the rise of fascism in their own countries and protect the Soviet Union against the now looming military threat from Germany. With economic depression and talk of war, there was a growing sense of crisis in the West. This was a period when the CPA could have been expected to make major gains in membership numbers and influence. There were, of course, some gains particularly in the industrial trade unions, but the most striking fact is the continuing marginalization of the CPA in Australian life. For this, the CPA had largely itself and its Comintern connections to blame. The policies of the Third Period, dictated by Moscow and ultimately embraced by the CPA, meant a level of extremism and confrontation by communists that quickly isolated them in

every campaign. The Popular Front—somewhat confused by the Australians with the ‘united front’, but endorsed nevertheless at the CPA’s 1935 Congress—meant persistence and persuasion rather than confrontation but, however many ‘progressive’ people it influenced, the CPA continued to be rebuffed by the Labor Party.

Although the Comintern declared in the ‘Theses’ of its Sixth Congress that the Third Period would inevitably give rise to a ‘fresh series of imperialist wars ... and to gigantic class battles’ (Degras 1960, 456), the main battles in developed countries turned out to be within the communist, socialist and working class movements themselves. Communist parties became absorbed by internal struggles, looking for class enemies within their ranks, engaging in ‘self-criticism’, and changing their leaders. Whenever they looked outside, they attacked not the capitalists but what they saw as their proxies, the reformist leaders of social-democratic parties and trade unions, who were dubbed ‘social fascists’. The ‘main danger’ to the communist parties, so the Comintern’s argument went, was the danger of ‘Right opportunism’ within their ranks, that is, compromising with labour’s established political and industrial leaders. In the United States this was said to be the crime of Jay Lovestone (a founder of the CPUSA, who was based in the Comintern’s headquarters in Moscow for part of the 1920s), who advocated a theory of American ‘exceptionalism’ to the Third Period. The economic depression that followed the Great Crash on the Wall Street stock exchange seemed to knock a hole in that theory, and the Lovestone group was expelled. ‘Right opportunism’ was found even within the Comintern’s leadership, when Bukharin was removed from his post as President at the Tenth ECCI Plenum in June 1929, having presided at the Congress in the previous year over the introduction of the new line. In Australia, too, Bert Moxon led a Comintern-backed challenge against the CPA leadership of Jack Kavanagh at the Party’s Ninth Conference. The consequent change in leadership in 1929 was a turning point in the CPA’s brief history (Curthoys 1993a, 65), though Moxon would not stay leader long enough to appreciate its significance.

The background to the 1929 leadership challenge was prepared more than a year earlier. At its April 1928 meetings on Australian issues, the ECCI had adopted at the instigation of Moxon a document on ‘The Queensland Labour Party’, declaring that it was ‘essential that the CP should formulate a definite and clear policy upon which to take the lead in its opposition to the McCormack Government at the forthcoming State elections’, held in May 1929 (CAML 495–3–64). It had proposed a mix of support for left-wing ALP candidates, withdrawal of communist support for Labor in other constituencies, and fielding communist candidates in selected constituencies. The resolution was endorsed by the Australian CEC on 12 July 1928. It was not seen as ‘interference’ in Australian affairs; indeed Wright regarded the discussions that produced the ‘Queensland resolution’ as the ECCI’s first serious consideration of the Australian

situation (Curthoys 1993a, 59). But whatever the merits of the strategy, it began to crystallize opposition to Jack Kavanagh's leadership, for Kavanagh could be fitted into the pattern of 'Right deviationism' then being cut in Moscow.

Having placated Moxon's Queenslanders by allowing them to stand candidates at the 1929 state election, which was lost by Labor, the general issue of the ALP returned very quickly to disturb the whole CPA. A federal election was called for 12 October 1929. The CEC decided not to take the Queensland option, but to support Labor at the federal level. The decision was made on 15 September 1929, and Lance Sharkey and Moxon sent a cable protesting it to the Anglo-American Secretariat of the Comintern three days later. The ECCI sent cables on 26 September, and then again on 29 September, insisting that the Queensland option be applied nationally. Moxon and Sharkey sent a further telegram to the ECCI on 8 October: 'Our motion that Comintern instructions be operated on received no support Central Committee'. The ECCI continued to insist that the CPA field independent candidates. Finally, on 6 December 1929, *Workers' Weekly* printed an Open Letter from the Comintern dated 13 October. The letter insisted that the CPA had to 'conduct open warfare' against the Labor Party.

The Comintern had made its views abundantly clear by telegram, convinced—as it disingenuously put it—that the CPA's forthcoming Annual Conference would adopt the corrected policy:

CPA CONFRONTED SERIOUS PROBLEMS PRINCIPLE AND TACTICS WHICH WILL DETERMINE FUTURE DIRECTION AUSTRALIAN REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENT STOP ... TASK CONVENTION SUBJECT SEVEREST CRITICISM DENOUNCING OPPORTUNIST ATTITUDE TOWARDS [sic] LABGOVERNMENT EXPRESSD PARTYS MANIFESTO FEDERAL ELECTIONS STOP CONSIDER CRITICISM MINORITY CEC AND CERTAIN LOCAL ORGANISATIONS THIS OPPORTUNIST ATTITUDE PERFECTLY SOUND AND NECESSARY STOP TASK CPA COME FORWARD AS ONLY WORKING CLASS PARTY STOP ... CEC ARGUMENTS DEFENCE ITS OPPORTUNIST POLICY COMPLETELY REFUTED BY EVENTS ONLY PROVES CORRECTNESS POLICY INTERNATIONAL STOP ... CONVINCED CONVENTION WILL ADOPT CORRECTED POLICY WHICH WILL ENABLE PARTY FULFIL GREAT TASKS (CAML 495–3–181)

The Comintern followed this up with another telegram on 11 October 1929:

PARTYS DUTY AS SOLE PARTY WORKING CLASS CONDUCT INDEPENDENT CLASS POLICY OPPOSITION LABOUR PARTY TU BUREAUCRACY STOP FIRST CONDITION SUCCESSFUL CONDUCT THIS POLICY RUTHLESS COMBATING RIGHT DEVIATIONS OWN RANKS BY INTRODUCING STRONGER WIDER SELF-CRITICISM STOP ... ECCI SENT OPEN LETTER OUTLINING FUTURE POLICY COMPARTY STOP DEMAND WIDEST CIRCULATION LETTER AMONG MEMBERSHIP THOROUGH DISCUSSION PRIOR PARTY CONFERENCE STOP

EXPECT PARTY CONFERENCE BY MEANS SELFCRITICISM STRAIGHTEN
PARTY LINE ACCORDING DECISIONS SIXTH CONGRESS TENTH PLENUM
... (CAML 495-4-3)

This episode suggests that the bulk of the CPA leadership had not understood the profound changes happening in the Comintern, as Stalin consolidated his hold on the levers of the organization. They were perplexed by the advice they were given. There was, in fact, nothing 'straight' about the Comintern's line. The upshot of the Ninth Conference was that the minority—Moxon, Sharkey and J.B. Miles—overthrew the majority of the previous CEC; in all of this, as Curthoys (1993a, 66) argued, 'the Comintern had been the deciding factor'. It was an assessment with which Jack Blake, with the benefit of considerable hindsight, agreed (Blake 1972, 44). At its conclusion the new leadership sent to the ECCI on 30 December 1929 a telegram in which the conference 'DECLARES UNSWERVING LOYALTY NEW LINE' (Document 59).

The general position of the Comintern during the Third Period on large-scale labour—i.e., social democratic—parties was that their leaderships had to be exposed to the working class. This was a position that was designed for Europe, could fit Australia, but did not fit the United States, which had no such party. How the Americans contrived to 'expose' labour leaders was contentious and changing, and was probably doomed from the start. It even included, among other things, trying to form such a labour party. The problem was that communists had great difficulty in convincing workers they were being betrayed, and confronting social democrats during the Third Period as 'social fascists' proved disastrous. It isolated communists, divided workers, and contributed to the rise of Nazism in Germany.

The leadership change at the Ninth Conference of the Australian party also reveals a marked change in the style of relations between the Comintern and the CPA. Previously, the CPA had imagined that the relationship was reciprocal, even if it had deferred to Comintern 'advice' with alacrity. But while the Comintern may have been exasperated by the intermittent communications from Australia (and vice versa), the tone of the relationship in 1929 reveals a major change in the way that business was conducted. The Soviet party, and Stalin in particular, were not simply *primus inter pares*, they were unchallengeable. Whatever notions communists might previously have entertained about their parties as forums for discussion (and they tended to be limited to notions of discussion-for-action), these were now replaced by analogies with armies following their leaders into battle. Trotsky's 'logic of substitutionism' had struck again: Leninism was irredeemably centralizing.¹ Some who were closer to the

¹ This is not to excuse Trotsky who, once he had joined the Bolsheviks in 1917, was a champion of centralization, as his organizing of the Red Army and his proposals for the 'militarization of labour' show. Trotsky would probably have insisted that the key difference between his approach and Stalin's

centre noticed the change and made dramatic, but futile, criticisms. The esteemed elder German revolutionary, Clara Zetkin, for example, declared in March 1929 that the Comintern ‘has turned from a living political body into a dead mechanism which on the one hand is capable of swallowing orders in Russian and on the other of regurgitating them in different languages’ (cited McDermott and Agnew 1996, 86). Zetkin nevertheless remained a member. The new Australian leadership knew what was expected of them: Moscow was always right. And political differences and debate were henceforth reduced to simplistic labelling. Nearly 60 years later, Edna Ryan—wife of Jack Ryan, who was defeated in the ballot for the new CEC at the Ninth Conference and later hounded out of the CPA—reflected that something fundamental about the CPA in the 1920s had changed with the Ninth Conference: ‘it didn’t occur to us at the time that we were enjoying liberty of thought and expression, but there was no hushing and stifling, no fear of being accused if one proposed a tactic or an idea’ (cited Curthoys 1993a, 67).

As a leader, Moxon in March 1930 urged tightening up in the CPA for better ‘Bolshevization’ (495–94–61), but his reign was short-lived. He embraced the Third Period with an enthusiasm that threatened to isolate the Party from the working class: advocating confrontations with police and, in April 1930, a general strike. His attacks on, and eventual expulsion of, Jack Kavanagh and Jack Ryan (both of whom were respected in the broader workers’ movement) confirmed his recklessness. At a closed session of the Communist Party Plenum in January 1932, he himself was removed from the CC by unanimous decision (495–94–91). There was cable traffic between ECCI and the CPA over this move, with Moxon (and others) appealing for ECCI intervention against their expulsions (495–94–94), as Moxon had earlier appealed against Kavanagh, but the Anglo-American Secretariat was this time unmoved. All of this is faithfully recorded in the CAAL documents. Interestingly, Moxon’s two former collaborators—Sharkey and Miles—would go on to have long careers as Party leaders. Sharkey was successful because he read the signs well, attaching himself to prevailing personalities, and detaching himself when required. Miles was not originally part of the Party’s leadership (which was Sydney-based) because he worked in Brisbane, but after being brought to Sydney in 1931 to become Party secretary he proved to be a solid and reliable leader who would establish the Party’s sense of solidity for the remainder of the 1930s. Deliberately groomed by the Comintern (by means of the Lenin School) to take on a Stalin-like image within the Australian party, Miles was held in high regard by Australian communists but never idolized.

‘Bolshevization’ of the CPA, however, was a process whose time had come. It appeared in the guise of Herbert Moore, pseudonym of Harry Wicks, American

lay in the character of the leadership; hence his efforts (and Stalin’s) to be seen to be close to Lenin, who had become since his death a virtual communist ‘saint’.

communist and Comintern agent to Australia. Moore's arrival in April 1930 was neither unexpected nor unwelcome, and it was the culmination of much urging by the Australian comrades. The ECCI had been asked, inter alia, for 'Despatch of a representative to work with the Australian Party as instructor for a period of at least a year. (The representative who came last year² was unable to do much more than investigate, as he remained only two months)' (CAML 495–6–16). Moore laid the organizational basis for the transition from a party which experienced relatively open debate to one where there was only one correct 'line', deviation from which could mean expulsion, and a party where the centre was in control. He stayed in Australia for just over a year. He came when the Party was in the throes of the leadership changes instituted by the Ninth Conference. Moore was particularly hostile to Jack Ryan, wanting him to return to the Party only if he recanted his deviationism and accepted Moore's direction. The lever against Ryan was his refusal to accept that the ALP was a 'social fascist' party. As the letters published in this section show, Ryan bent towards the Comintern line about 'social fascism', and eventually accepted it (in September 1931). Yet he was never readmitted to the Party, despite his wishes. Moore's next target was Jack Kavanagh, a respected former leader. Where Kavanagh had stressed education of Party members, Moore wanted only training; where Kavanagh tolerated diversity of views, Moore knew that there could only be one line. The process against Kavanagh was drawn-out and humiliating. Brought before the Party's Central Control Commission in mid-1930, charged with criticizing the CEC for indulging in self-criticism, Kavanagh confided to his diary: 'The manner in which self-criticism is being carried on is indicative of an infantile disorder. "Self-Criticism" is intended primarily for those who do not kow-tow to the CEC' (cited Curthoys 1993b, 28). He was censured, forced to capitulate, and was finally expelled at the beginning of 1931. Appeals to the ECCI (where he was a candidate member), fell on deaf ears. He was reinstated to the Party, on probation, from September 1931 for two years, but even at the end he was not permitted to function as a full member.

Moore's organizational changes meant greater centralization and less questioning of central authorities. Party branches were changed from a territorial to an industry base, and the Central Control Commission was strengthened and used to stop dissent. Moore was also instrumental in removing Moxon from the position of Party secretary at the end of 1930, and bringing Jack Miles from Queensland to Sydney to take that position. He boasted that during his stay CPA membership had more than doubled. After the Tenth Annual Congress in April 1931, Moore abolished the annual meetings, and advised that a Congress would be held if and when there was a change, and change would be signalled by the

² This is a reference to R.W. Robson, who attended the CPA's Seventh Conference in December 1927 using the pseudonym 'Murray'.

Comintern: ‘We prepare congresses under the direction and advice of the CI’ (CAML 495–94–67). Consequently, the next congress was not called until 1935, after the Seventh Comintern Congress.

Moore made quite an impression on the Australian party; nor did they want him to leave. In a letter of 2 June 1931, the Political Bureau asked the Comintern to permit the return of their instructor to Australia after he had reported to Moscow. They admitted that they had been ‘very bad’: the conference in 1929, they conceded, had been preceded by the ‘infamous decision’ to support the Labor Party in the federal elections. ‘It is, however, essential that the ECCI have regard to our very bad past.’ It noted a ‘great improvement in the short space of twelve months’, and declared it ‘particularly necessary’ that Moore be permitted to return to Australia (CAML 495–94–70).

The Comintern recognized that the Australian party still had problems, and in October 1932, adopted a ‘Resolution on the situation in Australia and the Immediate tasks of the Party’, in which it noted the growth of the Party and increased circulation of its press, but argued that the Party ‘is still isolated from the basic masses of the Australian working class’ (CAML 495–3–338). During the 1930s, Blake, Dick Dixon and a number of other younger members were sent to the Lenin School in Moscow in order to provide the basis for a new—Bolshevik, Stalinist, or merely more compliant, depending on one’s prejudices—Australian party leadership. ‘Bolshevization’ had succeeded: there was no further need for a Comintern agent to steer the CPA.

The first real test of the CPA’s reliability was provided by another change in the line from Moscow in 1935. Sharkey and Ted Docker were present at the Comintern’s Seventh Congress, and committed themselves to its major new policy turn, the Popular Front, which aimed to fight fascism by creating strategic, cross-class alliances and supporting the (formerly demonized) social democratic parties. Communist rhetoric subsequently focused less on ‘class’ conflict than on uniting the ‘progressive people’ in defence of ‘democracy’. The theoretical shifts were audacious: Dimitrov clearly distinguished between fascism and bourgeois democracy as different state forms, and argued for the extension of democracy. Although the CPA’s Eleventh Congress later in 1935 readily adopted what it called the ‘united front’ policy, the Party took some time to realize what this policy actually meant. It was not just a matter of supporting ‘progressives’ in fronts against war, or against fascism, or in favour of international peace, or women, or Australian writers, or artists; it meant supporting the ALP in its election campaigns for government. So while the CPA made some ground among the middle class (Macintyre 1998, 323–25), the ALP did not requite the CPA’s rediscovered attraction, and the CPA was soon called to Moscow to account for its failures. A special session of the Anglo-American Secretariat—what the documents revealingly call André Marty’s Secretariat—was convened in July

1937 to consider 'the Australian Question', and took evidence over several days. Dixon, on behalf of the Australians, explained among other things the continuing difficulties of communicating with the Comintern (495–14–19).

During the 1930s, the Australian communists came under increasing domestic pressures from the federal government. Communists were frustrated when Customs would not allow many communist publications into the country, and disturbed to find their own publications banned from the postal delivery service. An amendment to the Crimes Act in 1932 had given power to the Commonwealth Attorney-General to obtain a declaration that an association was unlawful, and this continued to hang as a threat above the communists' heads though it was never successfully used against them. Nevertheless, communists remained hopeful—especially during their 'Third Period' analysis—that their ascent to power would be rapid. Moore, concluding an organizational conference, made the following notes: 'Elements of political crisis may begin to develop in this country within a fairly short time. The Party [would likely be] faced with the question of power within a reasonably short time ...' (CAML 495–94–70).

The defence of the Soviet Union, which had always been a priority for communists around the world, assumed even more urgency during the 1930s. Yet despite the decline in living standards among workers in the advanced capitalist states during the Great Depression (the effects of which lingered until the Second World War), communists found it very difficult to stir enthusiasm amongst their own working classes for the USSR. Information about life there was tightly controlled by the Soviet authorities, who used Western communists and sympathizers to paint flattering pictures for Western audiences. But the collectivization of agriculture and the wholesale deportation of large populations to remoter regions within the vast Soviet Union, the beginnings of industrialization allied with the internal passport system and reduced living standards, and ultimately the political purges, could not be entirely concealed. In building the communist future, human beings paradoxically turned out to be an expendable resource. Though the scale of the human tragedy in the Soviet Union may never be fully known, enough was known in the 1930s to deflate communist puff.

At the CPA's Eleventh Congress in December 1935, the Political Report—delivered by Jack Miles, now 'General Secretary'—had something to say about the Soviet example, and the history of the Party since 1930, when it had corrected itself:

I want to say a word about the Soviet Union. I have given a lot of attention to developments over there in the past. My study of the position recently reveals astounding progress. I feel enthused, I feel amazed, I feel happy, when I read

about the reports to the XVIIth Congress.³ It is necessary that we give a good deal of time to popularise the achievements of the Soviet Union ... We go before the workers full of confidence that the Soviet Union is a living example which can be followed by the toiling masses in Australia ... Since our Party got on to the line of the C.I. in 1930, no one can deny that there has been considerable progress. The P.B. to-day is better than ever fitted to interpret the line of the Comintern, to apply the line of the Comintern to Australia ... (CAML 495–94–123)

The Comintern had thus achieved its goal: it had created an Australian party that was fit to apply its line. The documents below chart how that happened.

Document 54

RGASPI 495–94–53. 21 Feb 1929, Higgins: letter: To Rob Robson. Typescript.

Esmonde Higgins and Robson resumed their earlier friendship (struck up during Higgins's time with the CPGB) during Robson's 1927–28 trip to Australia on behalf of the Comintern. In this letter, Higgins lets Robson know the progress of implementing the 'Queensland Resolution', which allowed the CPA to field candidates against the ALP in the 1929 Queensland state election. He also asks Robson to act 'as our friend at court', to get understanding and assistance from the Comintern.

THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF AUSTRALIA SECTION OF THE COMMUNIST INTERNATIONAL

395 Sussex Street,
Sydney, NSW
Feb 21 1929

R.W. Robson,
London

Dear Rob,

Your very formal letter of Dec. 9 is to hand. Good. Also the parcel. Thanks.

Why revise the October Resolution, except in the sense of dealing with recent details of the capitalist offensive and the heavy tasks which these impose on the Party? An article of mine, written for the *Communist International* and adapted for the *Pan-Pacific Worker*, tries to do this, on the basis of the thoroughly satisfactory October Resolution. No one of us here has time to examine recent data on the present economic situation. Wish that I, for one, had. I agree entirely with your observations on trends.

You would be interested in the very honest and successful attempts which are being made to set up workers' electoral committees for the Queensland election campaign. There have been some misgivings, but none on the part of

³ Seventeenth Congress of the CPSU, January 1934.

Moxon, who is working his guts out along lines that he would have abhorred a year ago. He has come down today to attend a CE meeting—the first visit to Sydney since he went north in July—and we will be able to review carefully the net total of achievements. It can safely be said that this is the only campaign which has brought forward a steady stream of news directly in answer to the Party's lead (this interests me particularly because of the *WW*), and that the Party has already been able to force all honest critics of McCormack⁴ to swallow and stand for our programme of left-wing demands. The Party is certainly far more clearly on the map. The great trouble is the basic weakness of the Party, especially in numbers. We have won respect with hundreds, at least, as the only real alternative to the McCormack outfit.

You had better understand that I am giving personal opinions. Some comrades here and in Queensland are full of doubts and suspicions and regrets, but I am convinced they are needless. The Queensland campaign does of course mean a hell of a financial strain for the Party. Every blasted ha'penny had to be argued out.

The Party is in a good state, although it has no more members. We're well in the timber dispute, at the wish even of the Timber Workers' Union officials in Sydney and Melbourne. Kavanagh, as chairman of the NSW Disputes Committee, is in high favour. The Party has the wind well up the Miners' leaders. I hope that you will have a look at the *Weekly* these days and follow the developments.

The "Peace" Conference is on in Sydney, and Jock⁵ is all for peace. There's going to be a crisis tonight at the Labor Council; relations have got to be defined. There were good interruptions at the sessions of the Conference on Tuesday and yesterday; you'll be surprised to know that, quite without premeditation, it was I who led the first disturbance, with enthusiastic backing from unemployed in the Gallery. Yesterday's riot of the women, led by the people you know, was a knocker. They owned the Town Hall for ten minutes. In Melbourne the Militant Women have been raiding timber yards and sitting on coppers. Jeffery has showed up brilliantly at the preliminaries of this session of the Conference.

I have been feeling very gloomy about the dirty way every promise made to me in Moscow and Berlin has been broken. There isn't time yet to know what has happened to London promises, although we haven't been getting ordered literature and have heard nothing from the Colonial Committee. Act, as you have promised, as our friend at court, and explain forcibly that we are very isolated and in need of all possible assistance. We have been getting a very few Political Letters, but possibly their fewness is the fault of the Post.

⁴ Queensland leader of ALP, and Premier of Queensland until defeated at the 1929 state elections.

⁵ Jock Garden.

I have been warring incessantly with the Customs to recover the junk they pinched at Fremantle, but without result. There is a better chance than ever of starting an all-in agitation against the Ban,⁶ particularly thanks to the attention which the NSW Labor Council has drawn to it in connection with the Peace Conference.

By the way, the *Weekly* can claim modest credit for inducing the *Labor Daily* and several other papers to put Peace in quotes when talking of the Conference and for forcing Duggan to dilate at length on the charge that he and his friends had been “chloroformed”.

For the moment Tommy⁷ is working full time, but for decisive reasons he will have to be allowed to go back to the workshop, which is tragic.

Following at odd moments with keen interest the preliminary discussions of your congress. It’s a great achievement to have stirred so much live argument.

Best of luck to all the lads, including Harry,⁸ Andrew⁹ and old Strudwick.

Hig

Document 55

RGASPI 495–94–46. no date [1929], Anglo-American Secretariat: letter: To the Political Commission of the Comintern. Typescript.

The Anglo-American Secretariat of the Comintern, which oversaw Australian matters, urges the Political Commission in this letter to send a representative to Australia and make other provisions for the better understanding of Australian issues in Moscow. This is one of the requests that would result in Herbert Moore being sent to Australia in 1930.

CONFIDENTIAL

To the Political Commission

The Anglo-American Secretariat urges the necessity for sending a representative of the Comintern to Australia for a considerable period for the purpose of helping the Australian Party to adopt and carry out the political and organisational line of the Comintern.

The Anglo-American Secretariat also considers it necessary to have a representative of the Australian Party permanently at the Comintern in order that the questions affecting the Australian Party may be more regularly brought before the ECCI and for providing a more regular channel for conveying the views of the Comintern to the Australian Party.

⁶ Higgins refers to the ban on the importation of communist literature; see also Documents 55 and 57, below.

⁷ Tom Wright.

⁸ Harry Pollitt.

⁹ Andrew Rothstein.

It is also necessary to consider the question of helping the Australian Party to maintain at least one full time worker at the Centre and two full time workers for the provinces.

In order to raise the political level of the Party it is essential to publish a monthly theoretical journal in Australia, which is particularly necessary in view of the literature ban and the obstacles to the penetration of communist literature into Australia. For this purpose also assistance must be given to the Party.

Anglo-American Secretariat.

Document 56

RGASPI 495-94-46. 20 Sept 1929, ECCI: telegram. Typescript.

In response to complaints received in Moscow from Moxon and Sharkey, the Comintern in this telegram insists that the CPA oppose the ALP in the forthcoming federal election, as per its Class Against Class line of the Sixth Comintern Congress.

Telegram

20.9.29.

WRIGHT 395 SUSSEX STREET SYDNEY AUSTRALIA

HAVE LEARNED THAT PARTY INSTEAD NOMINATING INDEPENDENT CANDIDATES FEDERAL ELECTIONS DECIDED FULL SUPPORT LABOUR PARTY STOP IF TRUE SUCH DECISION CONTRADICTORY INDEPENDENT POLICY COMMUNIST PARTY AND DECISIONS SIXTH CONGRESS STOP MUST COME OUT OWN PLATFORM EXPOSE ARBITRATION AND INDUSTRIAL PEACE COMMON TREACHEROUS ROLE OF BOURGEOIS LABPARTY AND REACTIONARY TRADEUNION BUREAUCRACY STOP EXERT ALL EFFORTS ORGANISE UNITED FRONT FROM BELOW NOMINATE COMMUNIST CANDIDATES AND WHERE NO COMMUNIST CANDIDATES COMMA SUPPORT CANDIDATES LEFTWING TRADEUNION WORKERS WHO FIGHT INDUSTRIAL PEACE ARBITRATION STOP IF THESE PROPOSALS TOO LATE RUN DEMONSTRATIVE CANDIDATES AS IN ENGLAND

EXECUTIVE

Document 57

RGASPI 495-20-3. 13 October 1929, Political Secretariat ECCI: letter: Open letter to the CEC of the CPA. In English, Russian, French and German versions. Typescript.

This 'Open Letter' from the ECCI to the CPA's CEC, dated October 1929, was published in the *Workers' Weekly* on 6 December, and thus became available to all Party members. It openly criticises the 'wrong policy' of the CPA towards the ALP, and indicates that the Party must reconsider its position at its forthcoming Ninth Conference.

Oct. 13, 1929.

OPEN LETTER TO THE CEC OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF AUSTRALIA.

Dear Comrades,

This is not the first time that the Communist International occupies itself with the Australian question. Already in 1927, it was found necessary to send a representative of the CI to your Party Convention, for the purpose of clarifying certain political and organisational issues then confronting your Party. In 1928, the ECCI, together with a representative from the CPA, formulated and adopted the so-called Queensland Resolution pertaining to the policy and tactics of the CP in the Queensland elections.

This time, the immediate cause for the serious consideration of the Australian question by the ECCI was the decision by a majority of your Central Committee to support the Labour Party in the Federal Elections in October of this year. This decision, plus your reply to our subsequent cable, makes it necessary to review as broadly as possible the situation at present confronting the Australian working class, and to analyse the central political tasks and organisational and tactical questions now before the CPA.

It is too obvious to permit of any doubt that the Australian working class and labour movement are at present living through a crisis of transition, which is only the reflection of the industrial and political fields of the new phase of development which Australian capitalism and economics have entered. Australian capitalism, like world capitalism, is passing through its third phase, which finds expression in the crumbling of capitalist stabilisation and in the intensification of class antagonisms.

The rather unique and privileged position of young Australian capitalism (with its huge territory and sparse population; its strong and almost monopolistic position as a producer and exporter of primary products; its keen shortage of labour in both industry and agriculture before the war; its strong State capitalistic and protectionist tendencies; its "White Australia" policy; the widespread Arbitration Court system which was in reality a more or less perfected system of industrial peace; and its comparative isolation from world politics due to its former position in relation to Great Britain), —all this is now undergoing very deep changes.

Australian capitalism is now passing through a new phase of development. Having participated actively in the last imperialist world war, it has definitely been drawn into the maelstrom of capitalist-imperialist contradictions, this time no longer as a passive annex to British imperialism, but as an active agent and participant.

Australia, with its vast possibilities of further development and its exclusive strategic position in the Pacific (where the conflict of imperial interests, especially between the two chief rivals—USA and Britain—is keenest), becomes the scene of ever sharper competition between American and British capital.

In this rivalry Australia strives to play off Great Britain against America in the effort to ensure an independent imperialist development. On the one hand the Australian bourgeoisie is still dependent on Great Britain as the main market for its primary products, and on the other it is anxious to utilise American finance capital for developing its industries. In order to compete successfully in the world market (as regards primary products), and on the home market—with the manufactures of the more advanced industrial countries, the Australian bourgeoisie is compelled to secure a drastic reduction in costs of production and to reduce the working and living standards of the Australian working class to the lower level of the British and European proletariat. This is glaringly revealed by the general capitalist offensive of the last two years:—The Crimes Act, the Anti-Trade Union Law, the Transport Act, the Literature Ban; the defeat of the seamen, the smashing of the watersiders, the lockout and bitter five-month struggle of the timber workers who have been robbed of the 44-hour week; the lockout of the miners; the attack on the railwaymen and metal workers; the attack on the NSW basic wage, etc., etc.

The comparatively privileged position which the Australian working class occupied for several decades, and which was the result of the specific characteristics of Australian capitalism and economics (outlined above), has thus also been shaken to its foundations. Instead of a keen shortage of labour in the gradually expanding industries and in agriculture, there is now an army of unemployed reaching nearly 250,000. The 44-hour week is almost non-existent at present. The basic wage is being reduced. The trade union movement, which in the course of two decades has been devitalised and demoralised by the Arbitration Courts, is now shackled by the new Anti-Trade Union Law whose drastic provisions surpass even the British Anti-Trade Union Law. All the forces of the State, the military, the police, the judiciary, are put into action against the working class (seamen's strike, waterfront strike and timber lockout). In this general capitalist offensive the methods and tactics used by the Australian bourgeoisie are the well known and tested methods of the older capitalist countries: lockouts, ruthless crushing of strikes "industrial peace" conferences on the Mond-Turner pattern, etc.

The illusions that existed among broad sections of the Australian working class and that were fostered by the social-reformist agents of the capitalism abroad, to the effect that Australia was a "social paradise" and an "exception" to the general rule of capitalist development, are rapidly being shattered. The Australian working class is being robbed of all its "privileges".

The question as to whether Australian capitalism will succeed in its plans to subjugate the working class or whether the working class will assume the counter-offensive and develop its revolutionary struggle against capitalism will depend on the ability and determination of the CP to organise and lead the counter-offensive.

The prospects are thus most favourable for the only revolutionary Party in Australia—the Communist Party.

With objective and subjective conditions in its favour, the CPA will be able to fulfil its functions as a Communist Party only if it proceeds consciously and without vacillation as the initiator, organiser and leader of the economic and political struggles of the working class, and only if it consistently works among the masses and unmasks ruthlessly the treacherous social-fascist role of the Labour Party and of the trade union bureaucracy. This has not been the case until now. The Party has been slow in learning from the experience of the British, German and French working class and from events in Australia proper. The important decisions of the VI World Congress and X Plenum of the CI as well as the decision of the IV RILU Congress seem to have been neglected by the CPA. Even at its conference of December 1928 the Party could not give a proper political estimate of the Labour Party, define its fundamentally social-fascist character, its aggressive counter-revolutionary role in the present situation.

The Party by its tactics during the elections still appears to cling to the idea that the Labour Party of Australia continues to represent in some way the interests of the working class when as a matter of fact its past history, when in and out of Government, proves it to have been an instrument of the Australian bourgeoisie. In the present, third period of post-war capitalism generally and in the specific conditions of present-day Australian capitalism in particular, the role of the Australian Labour Party as the agents of the bourgeoisie stands out more clearly than ever. Under these circumstances to persist in the tactics the Communist Party of Australia is now pursuing means, not to lead, but to mislead the working class. The Party must clearly understand that a labour organisation—however radical it may claim to be—which fails to carry out a definitely militant class policy must inevitably drift to the side of the bourgeoisie. In regard to the Labour Party of Australia it must be said definitely that it has already gone over to the side of the bourgeoisie and to support it in any way means to support the enemies of the working class. Consequently, the decision of the majority of your CEC to support the Labour Party in the last elections is a glaring example of grave Right deviation deserving the severest condemnation.

The whole policy of the Party finds its crowning expression in the following statement of the *Workers Weekly* (August 2, 1929):-

In this country there will be no strike on August 1st. Not that the Australian workers have less need than our fellow workers in Europe to demonstrate against

imperialist war and the warmongers, but that in this country the lines of the class struggle have not yet become so clear that the working class is only beginning to realise that its enemy is capitalism and the capitalist State. The task of militants in this country is not yet to lead the working class in a direct challenge to capitalism, but to popularise the basic ideas of the class struggle amongst the workers, their wives and children.

To this we would add the following passage from the resolution passed at your last Party Conference in December 1928:-

We must not lose sight of the fact that the way to the CP leads through this Left Wing—not because we want it so, not because we in any way hesitate to transfer these masses directly from the path of reformism and Labour Party illusions to our own revolutionary ideology and action, but because these masses still hesitate to do so.

This transformation is not effected through political miracles, nor will we accomplish it through virtuous isolation of the CP from the masses, but it is a long and difficult process whose various phases we must help in speeding up.

It must be said that such statements border on liquidationism. They are a denial of the elementary principles of the role and functions of the Communist Party as laid down by the Communist International. In the light of these statements the decided Right deviation of the Communist Party of Australia becomes comprehensible. It also explains why the Party still has such poor organisational contacts with the masses and why it has made no headway on the road towards becoming a mass Party of the working class. Apparently, the Party regards itself as being merely a propagandist body and as a sort of adjunct to the Left Wing of the Labour Party, whereas our conception of the role and functions of the Communist Party is that it should be the leader of the working class and the principal driving force in its political and economic struggles. Instead of this the Communist Party of Australia is content to trail behind the working class and to preach to “the workers, their wives and children”. The Party grossly underestimates the intensity of the class struggle in Australia and fails to appreciate its role in this struggle. Clearly, as long as this state of affairs continues it is hopeless to expect the Communist Party of Australia to be anything more than a relative handful of propagandists—however ardent—isolated from the masses. We earnestly urge you, and the whole of the Party membership, to submit your policy and tactics to a thorough overhauling and we are convinced that, if you really have the cause of Communism at heart, you will radically alter your course and henceforth pursue the line of the Communist International.

At the present turning point, where the class struggle in Australia is growing keener from day to day, with a general capitalist offensive actually in full swing, with the Labour Party politicians and trade union bureaucracy revealing their

treacherous social-fascist role as allies and agents of the Capitalist State, with the inevitable radicalisation of the masses, it is urgently necessary for the CP to assert itself as the only true working class Party which organises and leads the workers in the struggle against capitalism, imperialism and its agents. At this point it is not only impermissible to support the ALP directly or indirectly (whether in State or Federal elections, and regardless of place), but it is the duty of the CP to conduct open warfare against the party of class collaboration and Industrial Peace, against the party of capitalist arbitration, against the party of such labour-fascists as McCormack, Hogan & Co., against the party of strike-breakers, wage reducers and police terror (seamen, watersiders, railwaymen in Queensland, etc.), against the party of race prejudice and White chauvinism (“White Australia”), against the party agency of British imperialism which is feverishly preparing a war against the only Workers’ State, the USSR.

[...]

The Party must make a thorough study of the resolutions of the VI Congress of the CI and the X Plenum of the ECCI in all nuclei and reorganise its work on the basis of self-criticism, eliminating all opportunist waverings, deviations and mistakes in its practical work. In order to assure the carrying out of the new policy you must take effective measures to secure the attendance of the largest possible number of delegates straight from the factories at your next Congress. The Congress should be preceded by a wide discussion among the Party members on the basis of this letter with the object of finding the practical form of carrying that policy into effect. To this purpose you must publish this letter and secure its widest possible circulation among the Party membership.

We fully appreciate the enormity of the tasks that the present period of capitalism imposes upon the numerically small Communist Party. But we insist that the smallness of its membership is mainly due to the wrong policy it has hitherto pursued. We are convinced that if your numerically small Party resolutely sets to work on the lines set out above it will hew a path for itself to the masses and by proving to them that it is really their leader in their struggles it will open the way for itself to become a real mass party of the working class.

POLITICAL SECRETARIAT OF THE ECCI.

Document 58

RGASPI 475–94–48, 495–94–60. no date [October 1929], ECCI: report: The New Stages in the Tactics of the Comintern: Australia. In English and Russian; typescript.

This Comintern report is highly critical of the CPA, especially of its failure to implement the line of the Sixth Comintern Congress towards the ALP: ‘The question of the Labour Party has never been understood by the Party.’ It notes a ‘rift’ in the Central Committee, but does not appear to know the protagonists. It appears to pre-date the Ninth Conference

by a few weeks, at which the rift would become open, and Moxon, Sharkey and Miles would oust the majority leadership of Kavanagh and Ryan.

THE NEW STAGES IN THE TACTICS OF THE COMINTERN AUSTRALIA

The Fight for Winning the Majority of the Working Class

The tactics to achieve the objective have not been put into effect by the Australian Party with the result that little or no progress has been made. Despite the growing number of industrial disputes, and the bitter fights waged by the workers against Labour governments, the Party still remains a mere handful of members. This position can be traced to the fact that the Party has failed to understand the changing conditions of Australian capitalism [and] the 'third period', with its resulting change in the tactics of the Party. As a result of the confusion existing in the question, and the statement made by the leadership that 'the third period' does not exist in Australia, none of the decisions of the VI World Congress or the X Plenum have been put into effect, resulting in the Party demonstrating glaring 'right wing' opportunist mistakes, chiefly on the question of the Party's relations with the Labour Party, and united front tactics.

The question of the Labour Party has never been understood by the Party. The decision of the Comintern that the Party should fight the Labour Party in the Queensland elections was carried out, but statements from the leaders of the Party reveal that this tactic was applied only because the Queensland workers had had 14 years' experience of a Labour government. When the Party had to face up to a federal election in November 1929, the utmost confusion was shown, resulting in glaring 'right wing' mistakes, as the following statement from the *Workers' Weekly*, of September 20th, 1929, on the federal elections will show: 'The Communist Party calls on the workers to smash the nationalist federal government (Conservative)¹⁰—the organiser of the employers' offensive—and welcomes the prospect of a Labour Government which would in present circumstances inconvenience the employers' plans, and may provide a short breathing space in which preparations could be made to meet fresh attacks'!

The domination of the trade unions by the arbitration courts does not present the task to the Party of unorganised workers. All the industrial workers as a result of arbitration are organised but at the same time disorganised to the extent that arbitration is consistently encouraging the formation of new unions. Organisers paid by the government are deliberately sent into militant unions to encourage members to break away from the union into a new organisation, with a different award and higher benefits. The Party's work in the trade unions is weak. The policy of the 'united front tactic from above' is practised instead of

¹⁰ The parenthesis was added by hand.

‘from below’. This considerably weakens the whole of the Party’s campaign against arbitration and industrial peace. Recent industrial struggles have shown the will to fight on the part of the masses, but the Party’s failure to consistently organise the masses for struggle has resulted in a reliance on a leadership permeated with an arbitration court ideology instead of a fighting leadership. The building of the MM has also shown the Party’s failure to understand the preparatory organisation work necessary for such an organisation. The conference called in Sydney in July 1929 to launch the MM consisted mainly of Party members and leading militants, consequently it still remains a paper organisation. ‘Unity from above’ is preferred by the Party in its success in obtaining the affiliation of the NSW Labour Council to the Profintern, and the Australian Council of Trade Unions to the PP TUS.¹¹ With the result that the Sydney Labour Council is able to refute the letters from the Profintern without the Party being able to rally the support of the masses against the pseudo-lefts. Garden, secretary of the NSW Labour Council, has already launched an attack on the CP succeeding in removing Comrade Kavanagh from the position of trade union organiser, and has every prospect of removing Comrade Ryan from the research department. The ACTU has broken its affiliation with the PP TUS.

Street demonstrations have been held in Sydney in connection with the miners’ strike and unemployment, but the Party is still afraid to organise street demonstrations on work days, confining its activities in this direction to Sundays. Labour Defence Corps have been formed in many of the mining districts; in Kurri, Cessnock, etc. and also in Sydney. News from *The Workers’ Weekly* suggests that these Defence Corps have been formed under the influence of the Party, which has recently sent many members from Sydney into the mining districts.

The 1st August campaign once more demonstrates the Party’s failure to break with ‘legalism’. The Party’s statement on the First of August campaign in *The Workers’ Weekly* reveals once again the timidity, the lack of initiative, and failure to recognise the Party’s role as the leader of the workers. The statement reads: ‘In this country there will be no strikes on August 1st. Not that Australian workers have less need than our fellow workers in Europe to demonstrate against imperialist war and the war mongers, but that in this country the lines of the class struggle have not yet become so clear that the working class is only beginning to realise that its enemy is capitalism and the capitalist state.’—‘The task of militants in this country is not yet to lead the working class in a direct challenge to capitalism, but to popularise the basic ideas of class struggle among the workers and their wives and children.’

¹¹ Pan-Pacific Trade Union Secretariat.

These examples show that the Party has not yet come out of the propaganda stage. By its right-wing policy and incorrect tactics, it has failed to lead the workers in the growing class conflicts, which has resulted in its membership remaining at about three hundred.

*In recent weeks a rift has come about in the Central Committee. As yet we have received no information on the causes or nature of this rift.*¹²

Document 59

RGASPI 495–94–53. 30 Dec 1929, Presidium CPA: Marconigram. Typescript.

The victors at the Ninth Conference greet the Comintern.

MARCONIGRAM

30 December 1929

ANNUAL CONFERENCE GREETES COMINTERN DECLARES UNSWERVING
LOYALTY NEW LINE CONDEMNS CAPITULATORY OPPORTUNIST POLICY
FEDERAL ELECTIONS AND RIGHT DEVIATIONS SINCERITY SELF CRITICISM
PROVED FUTURE ACTIVITIES

LOUGHRAN BARRAS SHARKEY MILES MOXON
PRESIDIUM

Document 60

RGASPI 495–94–61. 21 March 1930, Pollitt (forwarding to an unknown comrade, perhaps in Moscow, a letter by Esmonde Higgins). Typescript.

Higgins, the only member of the 'right-wing' deviationists to be re-elected to the CPA's CEC at the Ninth Conference in 1929, writes to Harry Pollitt, a candidate member of the ECCI from the CPGB, seeking help against the new leadership of the Party, now led by Herbert Moxon. Higgins concedes that the old leadership did not understand the new line of the Comintern (though, being present at the Sixth Congress, he should have), and blames the problems in communication. He describes the atmosphere of the Ninth Conference as 'poisonous', is convinced that Moxon wants to expel those he opposes despite their being loyal communists, and asks for a 'guide' to be sent to Australia to 'knock our heads together'. Herbert Moore arrived soon after, and Higgins got more than he bargained for.

21st March 1930

Dear Comrade,

I have received a letter from an old comrade of mine in the Australian Party, comrade Higgins. He particularly wished me to treat the letter as confidential

¹² These two sentences do not appear in the English version. They have been appended at the end of the Russian version, by hand.

but I consider it gives such a revealing picture of the situation in the Party that for your personal information I am sending extracts from it so that you may have an idea what is going on.

All good wishes,
Yours fraternally,
Harry Pollitt

The old CC wasn't bad. We did far better work last year than ever before. But we slipped to blazes in not understanding the new line. One reason, of course, is lack of material. Although I'm supposed to be in charge of Agit-Prop, and the editor of the paper, I haven't yet had a glimpse of the Economic Tasks Resolution of the Tenth Plenum. There is one copy in Sydney (itself a gift from an accidental receiver in Melbourne), and it is being duplicated. This state of affairs is due partly to the literature ban, and partly to complete indifference of comrades in London and Berlin.

But we hadn't begun to work things out afresh, and when the Federal elections came on, we rushed excitedly about, happy in the prospect of at last getting an end to the 13 years' cry: "Wait until we get a Labour Government." And we were so impressed with the role of Bruce as the organiser of British imperialism's offensive, that we assumed that Scullin would have to make at least a pretence of being different for a while. No one dreamed that Scullin's self-exposure would be so prompt or so complete.

So with the timber strike. Everyone knew that the industry was knocked rotten, but no one realised how completely rotten. We thought there was a chance of knocking back the extra four hours, and we fought accordingly, and missed a wonderful chance to bring to life new rank and file organisations.

The so-called opposition in the CC and the Party was equally to blame throughout the year, but couldn't swallow the election line and then rationalised objections that hadn't existed on other questions. There developed a dog fight called a discussion. I, as editor, deliberately let it run its course, though it was destroying the *Weekly* as a popular paper, and though it really required direction. I wanted it to be on record as an experiment that had failed, so that next time we could discuss intelligently.

Then came the conference, in an atmosphere absolutely poisonous. The new CC was elected on the second day, and after that the conference became a dud, although it lasted three more days. The opposition ticket romped home, except for three—a bloke who has just gone to gaol for five months, a miner from Lithgow (150 miles away), and me. How I got on I don't know; evidently they thought the paper needed me!

Since then the situation has got still more poisonous. The deeds of the CC are all right. We are honestly trying to work out the new line in very complicated

circumstances, getting unquestionably good results in the coalfields; there is no disunity on the CC, except that the non-opposition three distrust the judgement of the general Secretary. We are putting the Party on the map better than before.

But each meeting shows that Moxon won't be happy till he's expelled half the Party—particularly Kavanagh, Wright, Jack Ryan and Jeffery. (He would add Hector Ross and me, but we have certain modest triumphs to strengthen us.) Nothing definite but perpetual sneers and jibes and misrepresentations against which I and Lithgow have continually to protest. And this kind of talk is going the round of the Party. I expect any day a dramatic move for the expulsion of these four at least.

And there is no justification. Certainly they are inclined to be right-wingers in certain respects. (Even I had to break with them early in the discussion.) Kavanagh is a born sectarian who has never developed since the pre-war Socialist Party of Canada, Wright is caution at all costs, Ryan is inclined to attach a great deal of importance to the Trades Hall. Jeffery while one minute wanting to knife Garden even more than the rest of us, has an MM complex. But there is nothing in the activities of these blokes to suggest that they are anti-Party or even anti-new line. They accept it even if they might not relish it. They are absolutely loyal to the Party and we cannot afford to lose any of them. (Kavanagh and Ryan are excellent propagandists and the other two are wonderfully solid workers.)

You will see that our petty inner-Party difficulties are not taking on a very high political tone. We are not capable of such, and anyhow it is questionable if there has been any politics in our feuds at any stage, so terms like "conciliator" hardly apply.

The coal fight is likely to tail off soon. The police have pretty well won out with their terrorism. It is only the Party which has kept the lads' spirits up. We'll have rail and metal fights on us soon, complicated by severe unemployment (2,000 New South Wales railwaymen sacked last week).

It would do us the world of good to have some guide, philosopher and friend sent us. We're raw, and maybe he could knock our heads together.

Document 61

RGASPI 495–20–3. 30 March 1930, Political Secretariat ECCI: letter: to the CC of the CPA. Typescript.¹³

As part of the 'class against class' strategy of the Third Period, the CPA attempted to wean workers away from established trade union leaders by creating a 'Minority

¹³ This letter is similar to a letter of 10 March 1930 sent to the CC CPA by the Political Secretariat of the ECCI and the Executive Bureau of the RILU, protesting about the methods used to organize the MM (495–94–58).

Movement' within the trade unions. Some of their attempts, however, met with disapproval from Moscow, particularly for their poor preparation and organization.

March 30, 1930

To the Central Committee
of the Communist Party
of Australia

Dear Comrades,

After hearing the report on the situation in Australia and after the careful study of the materials on the All-in Conference of the Militant Trade Union Minority Movement we desire to communicate to you the following views and recommendations:

[...]

3. Hence, we feel obliged to condemn the methods you employed in organising the "Minority Movement", notwithstanding the specific instructions we sent you on this matter. Almost no preparations were made for convening the conference. No efforts were made to establish functioning opposition groups in the reformist unions, in the factories, etc. In a word, the conference was convened before any efforts were made to establish your influence in the localities, in the districts and among the masses of the workers generally. All the work in connection with the conference was done "from the top". The conference was merely a gathering of a number of our leading comrades who, in session, declared themselves to be a "Militant Minority Movement". Such an organisational approach to the building of a revolutionary opposition in the trade union movement can only result in the formation of a small, sectarian body which will have no roots among the masses and will therefore be incapable of fulfilling the aims of the movement.

[...]

10. The economic struggles now taking place are being waged against the employers, against the forces of the Social Fascist Labour Government and the trade union bureaucracy. Under these circumstances, economic struggles tend more and more to assume the character of political struggles. It is the task of our Party to explain to the masses the full political significance of these struggles. It must make clear to the masses that every economic struggle and particularly those against rationalisation is related to the struggle against the war danger and above all against the danger of war against the Soviet Union, that it is related with the struggle of the oppressed colonial peoples. The Party must, by actively participating in and securing the leadership of the struggles of the working class—rely for this purpose on the revolutionary trade union opposition—develop them more and more into mass political strikes against the

danger of war, against the oppression of colonial peoples, against the Labour Fascist Government.

[...]

POLITICAL SECRETARIAT ECCI.
COMMUNIST FRACTION OF THE RILU.

Document 62

RGASPI 534-7-5. 25 May 1930, Moore: letter to CI. Typescript. Stamped in Russian: Secret.

Herbert Moore arrived in Australia in April 1930. His letters are a first-rate source of information about the condition of the CPA organization, its leaders, and about the attitude of communists towards Moscow. The major question taken up in this letter is the state of communist organization of the 'Militant Minority Movement' in the factories. The question of Jack Ryan's expulsion and continuing influence is also addressed.

May 25th, 1930.

Dear Comrades,

As soon as I arrived here about April 10, I took up with the Party the general line of our trade union fraction work in the Minority Movement and in the New South Wales Labor Council. I made recommendations to the Central Committee along the lines of the agreement on policy reached at joint sessions of the Communist fraction of the Profintern and the Anglo-American Secretariat of the Comintern on the day I left Moscow.

The Central Committee of the Party, after some discussion, unanimously accepted all my recommendations. It was quite apparent that the policy formulated by us in Moscow was different from the policy being carried out by the Party in Australia. In regards to the New South Wales Labor Council the Central Committee was pursuing a policy of practically ignoring the Council and confining its activities almost exclusively to attacks from the outside. I explained to the Comrades that such a policy was a form of "left" sectarianism, and after a considerable time convinced them that we should not only activate our Party members by organising them definitely into a functioning fraction inside the New South Wales Labor Council, but that we should proceed to the organisation of a Vigilance Committee for the RILU composed of our Party members and militant sympathisers in the Council and to proceed to organise similar committees in all the local unions where we have members or influence.

Our fraction has been meeting regularly and waging a fight on all class issues since the adoption of the new policy. Our strength in the Council is approximately twenty (20) whom we can rely upon out of a total of approximately ninety delegates. However, we have succeeded on a number of occasions in getting

votes of censure against the Federal Labor Government in spite of the resistance of Garden and his supporters. (The arrest and deportation of Indonesian prisoners to the Dutch imperialists; the arrest and imprisonment of the May Day demonstrators at Darwin by the Federal Labor Government; the selection of delegates to the RILU congress.) In the fight for delegates to the RILU Congress Garden tried to defeat the proposal to send a delegation on the hypocritical excuse that the Council was without money and some of his cohorts raised the question about the necessity for using any money that could be obtained for unemployed relief instead of sending people on holiday trips to Europe. Our comrades at two sessions waged a determined and very effective fight in defense of the line of the RILU and pointed out that by sending delegates to the fifth Congress who would report back to the Australian workers the decisions arrived at as a result of deliberations of workers from all over the world would strengthen the Australian movement and enable us to fight more effectively both for employed and unemployed.

When Garden realised that the fight of our comrades was so effective that he could not hope to defeat them, even on the pretext of no finances, he then postponed selection of delegates for one week in order to give him a chance to organise his machine to send his own henchmen. He wanted to prevent any of the known militants going to the RILU Congress who would present the real facts regarding the shameful social-fascist policies, and expose to the RILU the slimy attacks made upon Comrade Lozovsky in connection with the letter of the RILU to the New South Wales Labor Council. The result was that of the three delegates being sent officially from the New South Wales Labor Council, only one of them (Cochrane, representing the Boilermakers' Union) is an honest worker, who generally follows the lead of our forces in the Labor Council. Another of the official delegates, Kilburn, is a member of the Executive Committee of the Australian Labor Party, a flunkey of Scullin, a left social-fascist, who in the Labor Council is always ready and willing and anxious to do any underhanded work or wage any filthy attack against our forces and the RILU at the behest of Garden. There is not the slightest doubt that Garden has definitely decided to wage an attack against our forces and against the RILU and that he intends to use Kilburn as one of the agencies for carrying on a slander campaign against the RILU and the Comintern when he returns to Australia. In plain words Kilburn is coming to the Soviet Union as our enemy and as an enemy of the Soviet Union. It is very essential that this person be given an unmerciful grilling when he arrives, that he be attacked and exposed by some of our leading members at the Profintern Congress and that the adherents of the Profintern in Australia be furnished with verbatim reports of his speeches as well as the speeches against him to be used in a campaign in defense of the RILU when he returns.

The third candidate, Lyons, is an utter non-entity, a mere rubber stamp for Garden, who will follow the line of Kilburn and repeat anything required of him. He should also meet with the same treatment as Kilburn.

In order that the real facts regarding the New South Wales Labor Council may be put before the Fifth Congress, the Vigilance Committee is sending a delegate of its own. This comrade will arrive with proper credentials. On the report of the credentials committee to the congress a special point should be made to the effect that there are three delegates from the New South Wales Labor Council and one from the Vigilance Committee. This could be discussed on the floor. Chances are that Kilburn may try to oppose it and that the comrade who comes for the Vigilance Committee will then have an opportunity to state why the Committee selected a delegate. This will expose Kilburn at the very start and also place him in an unenviable position throughout the rest of the Congress. Our policy in sending a delegate from the Vigilance Committee will be supported by Cochrane, one of the regular delegates from New South Wales Labor Council.

Other delegates are from the minefields [sic]¹⁴ and the railroads. Some of our comrades from the minefields, as well as the comrade from the Vigilance Committee of the Labor Council, will carry letters of introduction to Comrade Lozovsky. I suggest that the comrades of the Anglo-American Section of the Profintern discuss the situation in Australia with these comrades and aid them in every way in their work during the Congress as they are inexperienced, never having been outside of Australia before.

As to other work, the Party is carrying out the decisions regarding the Militant Minority Movement and the provisional nature of its executive committee. We are proceeding in all the various states in building up minority movements under different names. The militant forces work hand in hand with the Party in the formation of committees of action to resist the onslaught on wages, hours and conditions of labor. When struggles are developing these committees carry on agitation for our general program, and wage a fight for rank and file strike committees. When strikes are called and such committees are established these Councils of Action then become the driving force in efforts to extend the strike. (Details of such work will be given by our delegates, and in other reports covering mining, metal and railroad.)

The Party reacted very quickly to our new forms of organisation particularly in the minefields where the struggle was just reaching its final stages. When I arrived I discovered that the Central Committee, although following for the most part a correct political line, and raising slogans for rank and file committees, had no conception of the real function of strike committees and councils of action. The function of these organisations and their various divisions of work was

¹⁴ Moore doubtless meant 'coalfields'.

explained to them in detail and so effective were these forms that within a few days after adopting them in the coalfields we succeeded for the second time in the history of the struggle in defeating the recommendations of the Union officials to accept the wage reductions of the employers.

We are holding a Party plenum (Plenary session of the Central Executive Committee) the last week of June at which time we will endeavour to set a date for the convening of a conference of the trade union opposition. Whether we actually set a date, will of course, depend entirely upon how far we have succeeded in establishing opposition movements throughout the various States of the Commonwealth. One of our greatest shortcomings is the lack of funds to work with. Were we in a position to wage a campaign over a period of months, we could build a powerful opposition movement in this country. There is not the slightest doubt that there will be a number of sharp conflicts within the next period, in fact, now small spontaneous strikes develop in the metal, on the railroads and even in the mining industry, in spite of the recent fall-out, much faster than we can react to them with our limited forces, and our lack of finance.

Another grave question for the Party and the RILU adherents is the situation on the *Pan Pacific Monthly*. Jack Ryan, who is the acting editor of the *Pan Pacific Monthly*, and who was one of the leaders of the old right wing Central Committee, that openly and insolently defied the Comintern in supporting the Labor Party against Comintern instructions, is a supporter of Garden, carrying on in a disguised manner agitation that objectively supports the Labor Party, defends compulsory arbitration. Ryan also denies that there is such a thing as social-fascism as far as the Australian Labor Party is concerned. The fact that he is the acting editor of the *Pan Pacific Monthly*, enables him to use the columns of that paper for the publication of articles at variance with the line of the RILU. As a result of his flagrant violation of Party discipline, he was in February, two months before I arrived here, expelled from the Party. Since that time I have had some conversations with him and he says that he is willing to work with the Party, but that he will not sign the statement to the effect that he was wrong in supporting the social-fascist Labor Party, nor will he admit his wrong line on the question of social-fascism. There is grave danger that as Garden develops his fight against us, Ryan will use the *Pan Pacific* on behalf of Garden, whose name still appears as the editor of the *Pan Pacific Monthly*. I suggest that this question of editorship be immediately taken up and that someone be sent here for the purpose of editing the magazine if it is to continue. At the present time its circulation is practically non-existent. Ryan claims a circulation of some 3,000, but this circulation is based solely upon bundle orders received from the unions dominated by the Garden machine. These unions pay in a certain amount of money, the magazines are placed at their disposal and lay [sic] in heaps around the trade union offices and meeting halls. It can truthfully be said that actually less than 500 copies ever reach the hands of workers who read them. The moment

the *Pan Pacific* breaks with Garden, even his mythical circulation will disappear. There is no question that there is a field here for such a magazine, and that if properly set out, so that it reflects the class struggle in its columns and gives a revolutionary lead to the workers, a good circulation can be built up, but it can never be built up under present conditions.

Further information on this question will be furnished you by the delegates.

With Communist Greetings,
Herbert Moore.

Document 63

RGASPI 534-7-5. 25 July 1930, Moore: letter to CI. Typescript. Written by hand: 'very secret'.

In this letter Moore sets out his plans for reorganizing the CPA because of its deficiencies. Moore argues here that the CPA 'has never been organised on a correct basis'.

July 25, 1930

ORG. DEPARTMENT

Dear Comrades,

When I arrived I took up the question of Party organisation with the Central Committee. The Party has never been organised on a correct basis. The units of Party organisation were in the overwhelming majority still based upon the old social democratic forms of territorial locals. Only in the mining area was there any semblance of factory nuclei organisation, and for the most part these functioned in the same way as the local groups composed of members living in a certain neighbourhood. In spite of the organisational defects, there has been a steady growth of party membership, due entirely to the fact that the new Central Executive Committee that came into office at the Party Congress last December had been diligently striving to carry out the new line as laid down at the Sixth World Congress and the tenth Plenum. As a result of the long struggle in the Northern Coalfields where 12,000 (twelve thousand) miners were locked out for a period of thirteen months and are only now returning to work on the basis of a complete sell-out of the officials, who, throughout the entire struggle, resisted every effort to extend the strike, and fought to impose the terms of the mine-owners upon the workers. [sic] (A complete report of this struggle and the activity of the Party and the Militant Movement is being sent separately.)

[...]

In other industries I found that we had very few Party members, and there was not a single nucleus in any industry aside from the mining. At every meeting of the Central Committee the organisation question has been one of the principal points of the agenda. I proposed that we proceed to the organisation of factory

nuclei through a re-shifting of the forces we have in the Party. I recommended that we select certain factories or shops and concentrate upon them. In cases where we had three or four Party members we immediately organised them into a factory nucleus. In cases where comrades were new and inexperienced members as was most generally the case, we assigned to their nucleus more experienced members from the street and neighbourhood groups. One of the first tasks assigned to these groups was the immediate publication of Communist factory bulletins. (The number of these bulletins will be given later in this report.)

[...]

On the basis of reports regarding the total number of Party members when I left Moscow, there were approximately two hundred members in the Communist Party of Australia. That membership has since grown until today there is a total dues-paying membership of exactly four hundred and eighty-six (486). The membership is distributed as follows:

Sydney....130
 Northern Coalfields (Where the Lockout occurred) 90
 Lithgow (Miners).... 8
 South Coast (Miners)..... 6
 Broken Hill (Metal Miners)..... 16
 Victoria (Melbourne and vicinity)....140
 South Australia (Dockworkers & Miscellaneous) 11
 West Australia (Dock and waterside workers) 25
 Queensland (Brisbane and vicinity).... 52
 North Australia (Darwin) 7

Thus it can be seen that the Party membership is composed of healthy proletarian members from the basic industries of the country. There is a pronounced absence of intellectuals in the ranks of the Party, inasmuch that all such elements find ample means of disposing of their talents to the Labor Party and as workers in the official family of the trade union bureaucracy. Although it is only within the past weeks that a definite start has been made towards the reorganisation of the Party, we now have 17 factory and pit nuclei actively functioning and one YCL pit group. When we compare this to the situation existing at the time of the last Party Congress in December, we can gauge the development of the Party organisationally. At that time, the then Executive Secretary of the Party, Comrade Wright, in his report to the Convention, said there were no factory nuclei functioning anywhere in the Party, but added that, "An attempt in Sydney to make a start with a factory paper on the Harbour Bridge, is likely to succeed shortly."

[...]

INNER PARTY SITUATION.

The inner party situation has improved to a marked degree since the Party Congress of last December. The old right wing, opportunist Central Committee that supported the social fascist Labor Party in the elections in violation of specific instructions of the Comintern was overwhelmingly repudiated by the Party membership, and the opposition, under the leadership of Comrades Moxon and Sharkey, had the majority at the Congress. A Central Committee was selected consisting in the majority of supporters of the new line. There is only one member of the former right wing Central Committee now on the CEC—that is Comrade Higgins who, although he has certain reservations regarding some Party policies, nevertheless carries out the general political line of the Party.

One of the most persistent and unyielding right wingers of the old Central Committee was Jack Ryan, who is unfortunately occupying the position of acting editor of the Australian *Pan Pacific Monthly*. Ryan openly flaunted [sic; flouted] Party discipline and incited others to violate Party discipline. As a result of his unyielding opposition and publicly expressed contempt for the Central Committee he was expelled from the Party last February, some months before I arrived.

I have had two conferences with Ryan in an effort to persuade him to see the error of his ways and to work with the Party. He still contends that the policy of the old Central Committee in supporting the Labor Party at the time it did was correct, and that they were justified in violating the decisions and instructions of ECCI, in continuing their campaign in support of the Labor Party after they had been forbidden to do so. However, he now says that there are evidences that the Third Period is beginning in Australia and that with the Scullin Government in power it would be wrong to repeat the support of the Labor Party. He also contends that it is wrong to refer to all the elements, especially the left elements of the Australian Labor Party, as social fascists. In his practical activity he in reality supports the line of Garden and only puts up a sham opposition to him. His editorship of the *Pan Pacific Monthly* raises certain problems for the Party. I have persuaded him to run articles in the paper written by our comrades and will endeavour to break him away from Garden, and if possible, bring him nearer again to the Party. In my last discussion with him he expressed a desire to be a member of the Party and said he would carry out decisions. The Central Committee drew up a statement to the effect that he could make application for re-entry into the Party provided he would admit his error in opposing the open letter of the Comintern, violating Comintern instructions, carry out the line of the Sixth Congress and the Tenth Plenum and admit that his action in refusing to appear before the Central Committee to account for certain opportunist articles written by him was wrong and that henceforth he will act as a disciplined member of the Party and defend the Party before the

membership and the masses. He objects to signing such a statement. There the matter rests at present.

[...]

Thus this comrade [Kavanagh] not only flaunts [sic] the decisions of the Comintern and contemptuously refers to them as “tripe”, which in the lexicon of Australia means a product of imbecility, of half-wits who do not know what they are talking about, but he boasts of the fact that in 1920 in Canada he at that time opposed Lenin’s policy in relation to Labor Parties for that period.

[...]

Other members of the former leadership who were very bitter against the new line at the Party Congress, such for instance, as Comrade Jeffery, who is Secretary of the Militant Minority Movement, have been turned over and are now enthusiastic supporters of the Comintern line. Comrade Jeffery is the chairman of the Central Control Commission of the Party.

Generally, the Party organisation is healthy. The only opposition being confined to a mere handful, not more than six or eight members under the influence of Kavanagh in Sydney, and a few individuals in Melbourne. The latter, however, have no organisational connection with the Kavanagh element. In the coalfields and in metal mining, support for the Party is unanimous. It is very doubtful if out of the 486 members, there are even 25 who are not fully supporting the Party.

[...]

Further reports will be sent regularly

With Communist Greetings

Herbert Moore

Document 64

RGASPI 534–7–5. 24 September 1930, Moore: letter to CI. Typescript.

Moore writes of the CPA’s successes despite organizational weakness and lack of funds; it is noteworthy that after less than six months in Australia he has adopted the Australian complaint about being neglected by Moscow.

SYDNEY

September 24, 1930

Dear Comrades,

Conditions are increasingly favourable for our work here. The arbitration courts are being utilised as the initiators of every attack on conditions in the unprecedented campaign of wage cuts, lengthening of hours, speed-up, and all

the other accompaniments of an intense rationalisation drive. Our prestige increases tremendously with every struggle. We are the only section of the working class that is not aggressively aiding in the capitalist offensive; the only section that makes even a gesture toward organising resistance to the attacks on the working class.

In spite of deplorable organisational weaknesses, and a condition that can be described only as complete financial bankruptcy we have participated in every struggle against the offensive in every part of the country—from Sydney to Perth and from Tasmania to Darwin.

[...]

Please see to it that we get more of your material. We have had absolutely nothing on the 5th Congress. During its sittings we did not even receive an Inprecorr wire. In fact we never receive a damn word about anything until we get the foreign press and the Party press from other countries. We use some of the meagre funds we can sometimes scrape together for purposes of telegraphing and cabling for information, but never get any response. We know we are far away, but still we are fighting more or less effectively, and don't like to be forgotten when something important is going on.

Best wishes and revolutionary greetings,
MOORE.

Document 65

RGASPI 534–7–6. 25 Sept 1930, Moore: letter to Pan. Typescript.

In this letter to a friend in the Comintern, based in Moscow, Moore suggests that without the stiffening of the Comintern or its agent (himself), the CPA would slide back into their pre-Ninth Conference attitude towards the ALP. The identity of Moore's correspondent is not clear. 'Pan' may either have been Lozovsky, with whom Moore would have worked in the RILU before coming to Australia, or G. Sydor Stöler, a RILU official who helped to establish the *Pan-Pacific Worker*.

September 25, 1930

Dear Pan:-

Yours received yesterday. Had almost abandoned hope of hearing from you at all and thought perhaps your plans had not materialised. The enclosure will interest you. It is a copy of document recently handled here; and dispatched. When you finish with it please forward it also through your connections so, in case the first one did not arrive, this one will reach the proper destination.

As to the situation in the family, it is a vast improvement over the situation five months ago. All differences are overcome and everything is harmonious, except the periodical brain storms of JK [Kavanagh], who is now generally

regarded as somewhat of a bluff, trying to exist in the present on his imaginary past glories in the wilds of Vancouver and other points east in the dominion of Canada. His alleged Marxism is of the shallowest kind and consists only of phrase-mongering. Although he made what he regards as proper statements admitting his past right errors, he utterly fails to perceive the basis of such blunders. However, he admits that they were all in error in regard to the federal elections. He is gradually approaching the line, inasmuch as his outburst are becoming less and less frequent.

Tommy¹⁵ is impotent as I presume he has always been. What you might call a paltry fellow. His statement was better than JK's, but he is saturated with pessimism and tries to evade work of every sort.

I have handled Tommy's successor without gloves and have put him straight in regard to dealing with JK, Tommy and the others. Norman [Jeffery] is 100% for the line and is doing good work. In fact he is the best of the bunch. Hig [Higgins] is engaged in Anti-Imp work, but tries to evade every other duty, including resistance to standing as a candidate in elections here. If left to themselves I am sure the old bunch would repeat in NSW the same errors they were guilty of in the federal elections last year, because they think that Lang¹⁶ is better than Scullin¹⁷ and because certain elements close to them are for Lang.

However, there is to be a general review of the situation soon, through a discussion, and I am sure all of them will definitely come into line before it is over. There is no such thing as organised resistance to anything that is done, and I have utilised a degree of patience I hardly knew I possessed in dealing with them. All of them are very friendly toward me and have respect for my policies as applied to new developments.

As to Jack [Ryan], he is a problem. I have talked with him on many occasions and tried to persuade him to retrace his steps, make a statement regarding his participation in the errors of last year, repudiate his denial of social fascism and admit his error in flaunting [sic] the requests of the leading committee to explain some of his writings. He was excluded solely because of violation of discipline. However, his actions since have been reprehensible. He one time agreed to write a letter, and then wrote a short note saying that he would be pleased to resume his duties when he was reinstated. Of course that was nothing other than mere childish insolence. Then, the next outbreak [sic] from him was that he still believed that he was correct in the federal elections, but that now the line is not wrong because the ALP is now in power. The next development was his distribution of Lovestone documents—in a narrow circle, it is true, but still

¹⁵ The identity of this person is not apparent; Moore may be referring to Tom Wright.

¹⁶ Jack Lang (1876–1975), Labor premier of NSW, 1925–27 and 1930–32; he was dismissed from office in May 1932.

¹⁷ James Henry Scullin (1876–1953), Labor Prime Minister of Australia, October 1929 to January 1932.

sufficient to show his inclinations. He told me, personally, that he believed in “reading all sides in order to get a true picture”.

[...]

As to his relations with us; he has not come out openly against us, being content to spread pessimism and right opportunist propaganda among such elements as MacCauley, Macfadden, etc, people who are simple job-holders, without ability to lead any group for any purpose. His influence can be correctly estimated to embrace about six individuals, all of doubtful ability and integrity.

Personally I don't think Jack honestly wants to be with our family at all. His actions before he got out were deliberately calculated to provoke expulsion. And, of course, such a panicky, uncertain committee as existed after December, would permit itself to be provoked in just such a manner. I condemned them from the first day I heard of their expulsion, for the manner in which it was carried out, and insisted that efforts be made to rectify their own blunder in the case. If Jack had been willing to come back it would have been a simple matter, but he simply didn't want to come back, or else he thought that he would be reinstated by a higher body so that he could then have a factional argument against the leading committee here. I told him that no matter what happened he would be compelled to make a statement regarding his errors and his violation of discipline.

With the intensified activity in many fields, and with the rapid growth of influence and membership Jack is a dead issue at present. He is simply lost in the general advance and, aside from the periodical appearance of the *PPW*, with its milk and water contents, there is no evidence that he is on earth.

[...]

MOORE.

Document 66

RGASPI 495-20-3. no date [October 1930], Political Secretariat of ECCI: Resolution on the Situation in Australia and the tasks of the CPA. Typescript.

This resolution typifies the ‘class against class’ mentality of the Third Period Communist Party. It endorses the leadership change made at the CPA's Ninth Conference, but criticizes the leadership for the manner in which Jack Ryan was expelled in February 1930. Ryan would be a continuing problem for the CPA because of his influence as editor of the *Pan-Pacific Worker*.

RESOLUTION ON THE SITUATION IN AUSTRALIA AND THE TASKS OF THE CPA

[...]

The capitalist offensive has aroused stubborn resistance on the part of the workers, as is shown by the increase in the number of strikes, their growing militancy, and stern resistance of the workers to the police attacks, and the fact that some of them quickly develop into struggles bearing a political character (timber workers, shearers' and waterfront strike). The First of May demonstrations held this year in many parts of the country for the first time, the numerous unemployed demonstrations which frequently developed into open combat with the police, the struggle centering around the eviction of the unemployed workers, show the growth of the mass struggle of the masses against the bourgeoisie. All of the foregoing indicates that all the features of the general crisis of capitalism and of the growing class struggle of the proletariat are manifest in Australia. This completely destroys the theory of exceptionalism for Australia advanced by some former leading comrades of the CPA.

In this situation the task of the CPA is that of independently organising and leading the struggle of the proletariat against the attacks of the bourgeoisie and the Labour Government. This consists in the first place in mobilising the workers for struggle for their immediate and especially economic demands. The Party must formulate concrete demands against wage cuts, rationalisation and unemployment, such as the fight for the 7-hour day, and against the extension of the working week by the wiping out of the 44-hour week, for increased basic wages, for the abolition of the system of arbitration, for the withdrawal of the Anti-Labour Legislation (Crimes Act, Trade Union Bill and Mass Picketing Act) and for the establishment of full non-contributory unrestrictive social insurance (illness, vacation, reduction of old age limits, etc.), especially unemployment insurance, etc. The Party must give special attention to working out specific programmes of demands for the most important branches of industry (shearers, miners, waterside workers, metal and engineering, railway, etc.). These demands must be linked up with the general class demands of the proletariat and with the final aims of the Party.

The Party must understand that only by taking up and leading the economic struggles of the working class will it be able to rally the broad masses of workers to its banner and transform itself from a small chiefly propagandist organisation into a mass Communist Party.

[...]

The present situation and the interests of the struggle of the proletariat demands from the Party the consistent carrying out of the policy of class against class and the uncompromising exposure and struggle especially against Right

opportunist distortions of this policy. This requires the persistent application of the tactic of independent leadership in the organisation of the economic struggles. The tactic of independent leadership means the most bitter struggle against the trade union bureaucracy and the Labour Party.

[...]

In this connection it is necessary to point out that the Party failed, in the case of the Adelaide struggle, to counter-act the manoeuvre of the trade union bureaucrats in splitting up the workers, and thus failed to rally all the workers on the docks for a common fight against the employers and their agents.

[...]

A central task of the Party *for* organising economic struggles of the workers is the transformation of *the MM* into a broad mass organisation, capable of leading the workers in the day-to-day struggles. The present situation affords every possibility for the organisation of a broad trade union opposition inside and outside the reformist unions and having strong roots in the enterprises. The Party must understand that it can become a mass Communist Party only by placing the trade union work in the centre of its activities. The Minority Movement must be the leader of the struggles of the workers in the factories, must establish groups within the enterprises, and agitate and organise for the shop committees and establish the revolutionary delegate system for the accomplishment of these tasks. It must systematically and energetically work within the reformist trade unions (including the Australian Workers' Union), build strong groups, and develop a wide revolutionary trade union opposition inside these unions. The Minority Movement must establish itself as a national organisation, must form industrial sections, district organisations and strong local groups, especially within the factories. The preparations of a national convention with which to centralise and consolidate the movement should follow the directives of the joint letter of the Comintern and Communist fraction of the Profintern of March, 1930. The MM must pursue a most intense fight against trade union bureaucracy inside the reformist unions, notwithstanding their policy of victimisation and expulsion. It must offer the most vigorous resistance to the expulsion policy, raising the slogan of democracy within the union and fighting for the re-admission of the expelled revolutionary workers, groups and locals, and rallying the masses to oust the trade union bureaucrats, and replace them with reliable revolutionary elements. The task of the MM is to broaden and strengthen its influence and position inside the reformist unions. The question of the creation of new independent revolutionary unions may be raised only if the MM will have succeeded in a sufficient degree to expose the reactionary character and strike-breaking tactics of the reformist bureaucracy, and when the wide masses of workers will have been rallied to the banner of the revolutionary trade union opposition, and when they are ready to break

with the trade union bureaucrats. The Minority Movement must strictly follow the resolutions of the V Congress of the RILU in regard to the formation of new unions. "It is entirely wrong to mechanically create new unions which will only separate the most class conscious part of the working class from the rest. New unions may be called into existence only when the waves of strikes have risen to their highest, where the class struggle has become very fierce, where considerable masses of the proletariat already realise the treacherous role played by the reformist trade union bureaucracy, and where they are actively supporting the organisation of a new trade union."

[...]

The present situation is most favourable for the development of the influence and organisation of the Communist Party. The fulfilment of the above tasks, the realisation of the role of the Party as the vanguard of the proletariat, demand that the CPA increase its size, consolidate its organisation, establish strong roots in the factories, and cleanse its ideology of strong social-democratic elements and *remnants* of syndicalism. The present crisis of Australian capitalism must be utilised to the fullest extent for the building up of a large and powerful Communist Party.

The Party must take up resolutely the work of increasing its size. The recent increase in membership, in connection with mass struggles, shows that militant workers are ready to join the CPA and carry out its tasks. The Party must begin immediately a wide and energetic recruiting campaign, concentrating upon the building of pit and factory committees, especially in the most decisive sections of industry, and connecting the recruiting campaign with the work of the Party in the masses. The Party must destroy all remnants of the conception that the CPA is a narrow sect open only for a chosen few; it must welcome to its ranks all militant workers, men and women, willing to work and fight for its programme. The Party must strive to retain all new members by giving them practical Party work for which they are best fitted, by making it easy for them to acquaint themselves better with the principles and tactics of the Party and by drawing the best elements into leading Party work.

[...]

The ideological level of the Party membership must be raised; the still low ideological level creates a standing danger of deviations to the Right and Left. The Party centre must consider the question of organising a central Party training school as soon as possible, but must take measures already for the establishment of the local training courses. It must familiarise the Party membership with the programme of the Communist International, with the problems of the international Communist movement; must stimulate discussions on these problems and in this direction must give space in its weekly organ to international news,

and likewise take steps to issue a monthly Communist review which will take up the theoretical problems as well as questions of practical politics of the Party.

[...]

The present situation imposes extremely heavy responsibilities on our small Australian Party, while at the same time it creates the conditions for its development and for the fulfilment of its role as the revolutionary leader of the working class. The Political Secretariat of the ECCI notes with satisfaction the progress made since the Party Congress, and the election of the new Party leadership in December 1929. The Party has recruited a considerable number of new members. Particularly in the northern coalfields, it has established new Party units; it has taken the first steps for organising the Party on pit and factory basis and has formed a number of pit and factory groups. The Party, under its new leadership, entered the miners' struggle, combated the mistakes of the old leadership and very soon won the confidence of the miners and played a leading part in the struggle. The Party is playing an active, and at times a leading, part in other important working class struggles, unemployed demonstrations, etc. A notable achievement of the CPA was the organisation of May Day demonstrations in many parts of the country, for the first time. The CPA, small as it is, has become an important factor in the political life of Australia. The present leadership is trying earnestly to apply the line of the Comintern for the class struggle in Australia. The Political Secretariat calls upon the whole membership of the CPA to support the present leadership, and to unite with it whole-heartedly in continuing the application of the Comintern line, and to repel any attempt to hamper or discredit the present leadership.

At the same time the Political Secretariat notes that former Right wing leaders still exercise influence within the Party ranks, particularly in Sydney, its main centre. This is undoubtedly due to the fact that after the last Congress the Party leadership failed to conduct a systematic and popular educational campaign in the Party to explain the new line and focus the attention of the Party on the necessity for struggle against the Right danger in the Party. The struggle that was conducted was carried on more in a formal and mechanical manner—as shown by the manner in which it expelled Comrade Ryan.

The Political Secretariat declares that Comrade Ryan advocated a pronounced Right wing policy, both before and after the Party Congress, in opposition to the line of the Comintern and contrary to the interests of the Communist movement in Australia. Instead of exposing Comrade Ryan before the Party membership, refuting his totally fallacious arguments and proving his views incompatible with membership in the Communist Party, Comrade Ryan was expelled on a formal issue which enabled him to claim that his expulsion was the result of personal vindictiveness.

The Political Secretariat believes that the question of Comrade Ryan's reinstatement may be reconsidered provided Comrade Ryan is convinced, and makes a public statement to the effect that his line was entirely wrong, that he condemns and has abandoned that line, that he has adopted the line of the Comintern, that he is prepared to work and fight for the Comintern line against the Right wingers, and that he is prepared to abide by the Party and Comintern discipline.

The Party must begin at once an ideological campaign in the ranks of the Party to explain the Right danger, in the course of which campaign it must call upon other former Right wing leading members of the Party (Kavanagh), to make their position clear and to remind them of the decisions of the ECCI that Right wing views are incompatible with membership in the Communist Party. At the same time the campaign must also explain the danger of Left sectarianism and anarcho-syndicalist tendencies that are to be observed in the Party.

The Communist Party of Australia is confronted with great possibilities for growth and for winning wider influence among the masses of Australian workers for becoming in the shortest possible time a mass Communist Party. The Political Secretariat believes that by energetically taking up and carrying through the above tasks, the Party will be able to rally the Australian workers for the revolutionary class battles ahead.

Document 67

RGASPI 534–7–6. 1 Jan 1931, Moore: letter to Pan. Typescript.

In this letter Moore is still preoccupied with the consequences of the Ninth Conference, and the positions of former leaders Garden, Kavanagh and Ryan. In this and other letters, Moore again refers to the communist movement as a 'family', in some respects a very apt expression.

Sydney, NSW, January 1, 1931

Dear Pan,

Yours of November 22nd to hand; glad to hear from you after so long a time. The decision finally and rather belatedly to break with Jock [Garden] clarified things considerably and makes our work less difficult. Jock is no longer an internal problem and has been fought openly for some time past.

Jack R[yan] is, I am absolutely convinced, working hand in hand with Jock in spite of anything to the contrary he may have written to you. His recent actions prove that conclusively.

[...]

At any rate one thing is clear now; Jack is an enemy of our family and must be regarded as such. All connections with him must be instantly cancelled and

everything regarding the PPW sent through the address you have from me. Additional addresses will soon be furnished you for various kinds of communications, literature, etc.

It has been rather difficult for us in view of the fact that Jack was receiving letters and documents on policy without the family knowing about it unless Jack saw fit to inform us. Take, for instance, the decision to hold a congress here. We knew absolutely nothing about it until an article by Hector Ross appeared. Then we took the matter up with Jack and he told us that you had agreed to such a campaign. Of course to set the date for January was ridiculous. No preparations whatsoever had been or could have been made on such short notice. So we decided that we would try to develop a campaign to hold it sometime during 1931. I am certain, however, that the Labor government will not permit it to be held, unless Jack and the rest of the fakers think that by doing so they can strike a blow against us by flooding it with delegates and placing themselves at the head of it in order to kill it. We will continue the campaign, meanwhile watching carefully the reaction to it from all quarters. Please send us some material on it at once.

Your letter to Jack resulted in a final attempt being made to induce him to change his attitude toward us, but he still insists that he and the Rights were correct in October, 1929, and that our whole family was wrong. We may as well abandon any hope of doing anything with him. The plain fact is that he is a labor faker. He was reared in an atmosphere of labor fakerism, as part of a bureaucratic machine, and when the time was rotten ripe for a break with that machine he preferred to remain in his comfortable and familiar environment rather than venture into more difficult surroundings where he would have to put up a real fight instead of "manouvering" with the bureaucracy and playing with the movement.

[...]

The worst feature of the whole situation in regard to the PPW up to the time we got definite information on your stand was the fact that Jack and his supporters claimed that they were working directly under your orders. We hesitated, probably wrongly, to take more decisive action because we did not want to conflict in any way with your work. This was given a semblance of reality by the fact that instructions came to Jack that we knew nothing about—such as the Congress instructions which we learned of belatedly after Hector had written one of his idiotic articles. (Incidentally Hector is about all in, having continual epileptic fits, which may account somewhat for his weird mental condition in relation to everything. He will probably kick off in a short time.) I don't know whether the fits are an expression of Rightism or whether the Right disease produces the fits. It doesn't matter much, we can only estimate the results and deal with them.

Another confusing element was introduced when the student came back and reported that a number of our family were quite perturbed that Jack was kicked out and were afraid dire calamities would befall us. Recognizing that students may not estimate the situation right, we nevertheless made special and, at times almost ridiculous efforts to pacify the three Rights—Jack [Ryan], JK [Kavanagh] and HIG [Higgins]—none of whom has any influence anywhere, with the result that they felt encouraged to continue their course. While energetically smashing their Right conceptions politically, we were very careful with them as individuals, until JK's expulsion was demanded, in fact clamoured for by the membership and many non-members. His own actions forced the issue. Before he was expelled he was completely exposed in a very effective campaign on our part. His last act was the worst I have ever seen—actually preventing masses going the police on November 7th. He became the worst sort of opportunist and defeatist.

[...]

Write oftener if possible. It is no pleasurable experience to be so far away from all former activities for such a length of time.

We both send our regards,
M.

Document 68

RGASPI 534–7–6. 14 September 1931, Ryan: letter: To Editor of the *Workers' Weekly*. Typescript.

The long-running conflict between Moore and Jack Ryan (expelled in February 1930 from the CPA, but still influential in the workers' movement) came to a head in late 1931. Ryan here objects to remarks made about him by Moore, but takes up the key theme of 'social fascism', to which he had long objected. The issue, he seems to argue here, is not whether the ALP is a 'social fascist' party, but whether the workers will understand what the communists mean by that.

20 Realm St.,
Arncliffe.
14th. Sept., 1931.

The Editor,
Workers' Weekly.

Dear Comrade,

In the pamphlet *Australia & the World Crisis* by Herbert Moore, recently published by the Communist Party, there are several very personal and vicious attacks made upon me.

While I welcome political criticism of any of my actions, the attacks contained in the pamphlet are so scurrilous that I am compelled to expose their untruthfulness.

At the same time I quite realise that many of the personal attacks on Jack Kavanagh and myself could not have been made seriously because Kavanagh has been readmitted to the Party despite the assertions in the pamphlet of ... "the shameful betrayal of the timber strikers in which Kavanagh participated with Garden" and ... "who aided the capitalist class defeat [of] the timber strikers". It is obvious that the Party does not believe that Kavanagh was guilty of such treachery to the workers, otherwise he could not have been readmitted to the membership under any circumstances whatever.

However, there may be a few readers of the pamphlet, who, because they are not fully acquainted with the facts, really believe that I am as disgusting as Herbert Moore says. Therefore I will answer his charges point by point.

On page 2 the following appears:-

By clarifying the question of social fascism the Party was able to wage a more effective struggle against the right wing and against such agents of the pseudo-lefts in the camp of social fascism as the renegade, Jack Ryan, who denied the existence of social fascism, because to admit its existence would be to indict himself and his political boss, Jock Garden, who maintains him in his job at the Trades Hall, compiling lying statistics for the social fascist campaigns of the Labor Party.

I have never denied the existence of social fascism. On the contrary I have consistently stated, in articles and public speeches, that the Labor Party, assisted by the majority of the trade union officials, has been, and still is, ruthlessly attacking the workers in a futile attempt to solve the capitalist crisis. Moreover I supplied Herbert Moore with two quotations from capitalist financial journals that bear out this viewpoint and which were printed on page 23.

The reason why I usually avoid the term "social fascism" is because it is meaningless to most workers in Australia. In European countries where the social fascists are known as social democrats, it is quite probable that workers would easily grasp its significance. But in this country it is the Labor Party that is social fascist. To simplify matters I have frequently suggested that "Labor fascist" or "Labor Party fascism" could be used with better effect.

Wherever possible I use words and phrases that workers can readily understand. For this reason I eschew such terms as "bourgeoisie", "proletariat" the "materialist conception of history" and so on. That does not indicate that I deny the existence of the bourgeoisie and the proletariat or the soundness of the materialist conception of history, but I always make sure that I do not confuse

the workers with unfamiliar words. It says little for Herbert Moore's honesty that I have, on several occasions, discussed this very matter with him.

[...]

Document 69

RGASPI 495–94–94. 8 January 1932, N. Jeffery: letter/report: To International [Control Commission]. Typescript.

The Party's Central Control Commission was responsible for ensuring the political integrity of the Party by investigating those suspected of heresy, or spying, or sabotage, and expelling those found guilty. A Control Commission was first established in the Party in 1927, but it was strengthened as a result of Moore's reorganization which put Norman Jeffery in charge. In this letter, Jeffery assures the Comintern that the CCC has matters in hand and that the Comintern can expect an improvement in its Australian Party. During the 1930s the CPA was indeed subjected to infiltration by police agents, as it had been in the previous decade, but the CCC's chief role was to ensure that the Comintern's political 'line' was upheld by all communists on pain of expulsion.

COMMUNIST PARTY OF AUSTRALIA.

Central Control Commission

SYDNEY.

8/1/32.

To International ...¹⁸

Dear Comrades,

The Central Control Commission of the Communist Party of Australia has taken up the matters mentioned in your communication of the 16th October.

Many weaknesses still exist in the Party regarding the treatment of suspected traitors or provocateurs both in the flippancy with which suspicions are expressed and the laxity in rooting out spies and traitors.

However, much improvement can be noted in our work in this regard during the recent months, but considerable improvement is still needed because the Party faces severe struggles in which illegality may eventuate.

During the period 1930–1931 several police spies and provocateurs found their way into the Party, the most notorious being Constable Cook, attached to the police force in Sydney. This individual was responsible for some filthy provocative work inside the Party in Sydney and it was because of the laxity of the party apparatus, that, although he was long suspected, he was never dealt with.

¹⁸ Words obliterated.

He was the chief police witness in the Clovelly eviction cases and several other cases, where it was shown clearly how he had advocated murder, torture, poisoning etc. The manner in which he was exposed left much to be desired. His companion Spry was ably dealt with and he was expelled from the party, but not till after he had been allowed a little latitude, but he did no damage like Cook.

Another police spy, and provocateur, Parsons¹⁹, also found his way into the Party and was slowly working his way into more trusted activity when he was discovered. Here, as previously, our intelligence work in detecting these spies was very faulty. A characteristic of these provocateurs is their activity inside the Party, being most zealous in carrying out the tasks allocated to them. The Central Control Committee has not developed as yet the proper measures for the detection of these traitors and police spies. Further, our campaigns against them need improvement.

Some suspected traitors and spies have been dealt with expeditiously, although in this regard care has got to be taken that idle chatter is not taken for well grounded suspicions. In the recent seamen's strike, two suspected spies found their way onto the strike committee as representatives of the unemployed workers. They were, however, immediately dealt with and no trouble eventuated.

Considerable tightening up has taken place in the Party so that spies find it difficult to do real damage to the Party.

The communication from the International Control Commission was published in the official organ of the Party, the *Workers' Weekly*, almost as soon as it arrived.

Anyone found defending traitors is dealt with and expelled summarily, although we have had no difficulty in this regard because there had been no supporters in the Party for the police agents and provocateurs.

A fruitful ground for activity of these police pimps are the fraternal organisations such as for example, the Unemployed Workers' Movement, where Parsons first became active, etc. Much needs to be done to take the necessary precautions to deal with these people in the Unemployed Workers' Movement, etc.

The CCC has these matters in hand and a general all round improvement can be expected because it is recognised that greater vigilance, the selecting of special comrades for investigating work, intelligence activity, etc. is an important task needing attention in the combating of provocateurs and traitors, etc.

¹⁹ A New South Wales policeman who joined the Party in January 1931 undercover and was expelled in June 1931 for acting as an *agent provocateur*.

Regular reports will be sent to the International Control Commission on our work and directives and information for our work will be appreciated.

(Signed) N. Jeffery,
Chairman, Central Control Commission.

Document 70

RGASPI 495–94–95. 12 January 1932, Organisation Department of the CC, CPA: letter: 'Re The Threat of Illegality'. Typescript.

This letter to all 'Committees and Units' of the CPA reveals that the Party authorities had considered their responses to the possibility that the Party would be declared illegal, and provides directions about how to organize and work under illegal conditions. Given the confrontational style adopted by the Party during the Third Period, threats to make the Party illegal would seem hardly surprising. A conservative, United Australia Party government was elected at federal level at the end of 1931, and the 1932 amendments to the Crimes Act put the CPA on the defensive, but they were also the perfect excuse to stifle any dissent within the Party.

ORGANISATION DEPT. Central Committee. SYDNEY. 12/1/32.

To All Committees and Units.

Comrades,

RE THE THREAT OF ILLEGALITY.

The CC PLENUM held recently stressed the importance of being organisationally prepared against the threat of illegality which is being persistently pursued by our class enemies. In connection with this question the following general directives must be impressed upon our membership.

Party units in the workplace provide the most stable basis for our organisation. Therefore increased activity in establishing factory groups must be our main response to threats of illegality.

The aim of illegality would be to destroy our mass influence, therefore the Party will intensify its mass work. With its roots deep in the masses the Party will be able to defeat the efforts to destroy it. Under conditions of illegality the Party membership would intensify its activity in all the legal mass organisations of the working class and would seek legal expression in every sphere of activity in addition to its illegal organisation and work.

In each district competent instructors must give training to all Party functionaries on every detail possible concerning work under illegal conditions. Particular attention must be given to training members who are active in rural centres because of the special difficulties involved.

Personal contact will be maintained throughout the organisation by means of the system of instructors from higher to lower Party organs [...].

Working under illegal conditions all individual members and committees must be doubly cautious in guarding documents, names and addresses. Documents and literature which must be kept safe from our enemies must not be left in members' rooms.

The ordinary mailing addresses must not be used for confidential correspondence. In such cases, addresses unknown to our enemies must be used. Confidential mailing addresses must not be centralised so that detection of one would perhaps cut off all contact. In the localities a system of couriers must be organised to establish personal contact between the various Party organs for delivering instructions and literature. A separate address must be used for each contact.

Party meeting places are of great importance and every precaution must be taken to see that they are not discovered by our enemies. In this connection particular care must be taken when entering and leaving meeting places, not to crowd and attract attention. Care must be taken that spies do not follow members to meeting places.

Greater care will be taken in the acceptance of new members. The unit must be certain as to the character and sincerity of the applicant. Where necessary applicants may be given tasks in legal organisations where their conduct may be observed before accepting them into the Party.

[...]

Under illegal conditions, membership would not be divulged without necessity. In the event of arrest, questions concerning membership in the Party would not be answered either at the preliminary hearings or in the courts. The Party will fight strenuously to maintain its legal existence. In this struggle the Party organiser must be carefully guided by the leading committees which will determine the best form of challenge according to the situation.

The Party membership is warned against those who may seek to capitulate before the threats of illegality, causing a degree of panic and commencing a process of "burrowing". The Party fights for its legality. If defeated its work is continued despite all the risks that may be involved.

With Communist greetings,
CC ORG. DEPT.
CC SECRETARIAT. CPA

Document 71

RGASPI 495–94–86. 15 August 1932, W. Orr: report: ‘To overcome our isolation ...’. Typescript.

Bill Orr was a miner and a strong supporter of the CPA’s attempt to build the ‘Minority Movement’ within the trade unions. In 1934 he would be elected to the position of General Secretary of the Australian Miners’ Federation, the most substantial achievement by the communists in the union movement to that date. This document sets out Orr’s considered view that the CPA could end its isolation from the working class by concentrating on day-to-day issues of concern to workers rather than simply criticizing the workers’ reformist leaders. It was a protest against those who embraced the ‘class against class’ rhetoric of the Third Period as an excuse for denouncing the ‘social fascists’, and who consequently reinforced the CPA’s isolation.

15.8.32

TO OVERCOME OUR ISOLATION

ERADICATE ALL FORMS OF SECTARIANISM

LET US LEARN TO TRUST THE WORKERS. LET US STUDY LEADERSHIP

The question of sectarianism has been a burning issue with our Party and the most consistent of all our campaigns has been waged around this shortcoming. We have not succeeded, however, in overcoming all the manifestations of sectarianism which permeate our ranks.

In our endeavours to avoid many of the mistakes of our former right wing leadership, we have shown tendencies to veer to the opposite extreme. I shall deal only with one such issue, in which our leading committees have wrongly directed our Party and the MM, and of which I also have been guilty.

The issue to be raised here is the question of the “United Front” and “independent leadership”. On the latter point especially, to take up the question of what are the organs of independent leadership, and how they are formed.

Before going into the points raised, it is necessary to emphasise the tremendous importance of real clarification of these issues so that our Party can really move into the leadership of the vast movement of unrest now sweeping the working class of the Commonwealth. Such a careful study is all the more necessary in view of the success that has attended the “left” social-fascist moves to lead this movement into harmless channels.

[...]

We, the only Party really fighting capitalism, should ask ourselves: wherein does our weakness lie? Why is it that these workers, who are anti-capitalists, should still not only vote for, but supply the election funds of the capitalist agents in the leadership of the ALP? Why is it that these workers, who are desirous of fighting the loan council proposals, should still be without the organs

of struggle in the factories and mines where the main weight of the capitalist offensive falls?

[...]

Our work amongst the masses takes on too much a negative character, and we do not raise as the main issue in all our propaganda the need for the “united front” of the working class for struggle against the daily encroachments of capitalism on our living standards. This does not minimise the importance of the struggle against the social fascists who more openly come out as the agents of the bourgeoisie in assisting to transfer the burdens of the crisis onto the backs of the working class. The smashing of the influence of the social fascists must be pursued more relentlessly than ever if we are to succeed in leading the workers to the revolutionary way out of the crisis. The struggle against social fascism, just because of their identity of interests with capitalism, will succeed all the more rapidly to the extent that we are able, on the basis of our work amongst the masses in the enterprises and amongst the unemployed, to develop the struggle against wage cuts and worsened conditions and for the revolutionary way out of the crisis. In the agitation and preparation of the workers for struggle, and in the carrying through of these struggles, we shall be able, in the most concrete fashion, to expose the role of social fascism as the purveyors of defeatism, disorganisation and strike-breaking, and in such a way make our exposure real and convincing to the masses who are drawn into such activity.

[...]

We lead in the development of such “united front” work when, through our agitation, we initiate discussions amongst the workers for common action in struggle, which we help the workers to formulate. A condition for the success of our “united front” work is the overcoming of lack of faith in the workers. This lack of faith expresses itself not so much in an underestimation of the willingness of the workers to struggle, as in a lack of confidence in the ability of the workers to struggle intelligently. This is reflected in our insistent raising of such slogans as “only the militant workers on the organs of struggle”. Such an attitude not only reflects our weakness in the factories and our lack of faith in our class, but is a form of sectarianism which must be combatted ruthlessly.

Another shortcoming which does not contradict the above statement is our overestimation of the revolutionary consciousness of the masses, reflected in our mechanical measures against the social-fascists when, in many cases, political discussion is discarded in favour of abuse of the reactionary leaders.

Document 72

RGASPI 495–20–6. 27 July 1932 (?), ECCI: Draft Inner Resolution of the ECCI Secretariat for the CPA Central Committee on the New Zealand question. In German, typescript. At top: 'Most Secret'. Trans. by KW.

This draft of a Comintern resolution on the New Zealand question requests that the CPA send 'one of its responsible comrades' to New Zealand for a period to sort out the factional strife in the New Zealand Communist Party. In its draft form, the resolution is inconsistent on whether the period is three months or one year.

Draft Inner Resolution of the ECCI Secretariat for the CPA Central Committee on the New Zealand Question

The ECCI Secretariat requests that the CPA Central Committee send one of its responsible comrades to New Zealand for three months with the task of preparing and holding an extended Central Committee plenum with the aim of discussing and implementing the proposed main resolutions and subsequently helping the New Zealand CP to implement these resolutions.

The draft resolutions should be discussed in advance by the Politburo and, with the amendments made by the Politburo, form the basis for the discussion in the New Zealand CP Central Committee. It is essential to invite the leading Party activists, who perform mass work at the district and local level and especially in the trade unions, to take part in the Central Committee plenum. For this reason the draft resolutions prepared by the Politburo must be sent to all leading CP comrades. The extended Central Committee plenum must be informed of the Politburo discussions and the positions of the various comrades in the discussion.

The Central Committee resolutions must be widely discussed and studied in all Party organizations. The resolution headed "For the Prosperity and Freedom of the New Zealand People" is intended for broad dissemination and popularization. The resolution headed "For the Strengthening of the CP, the Best Weapon of the Workers' Movement" is intended for internal Party use.

In order to bring good mass workers into the Party leadership it is vital to re-elect the Politburo at the Central Committee plenum. The leading committees should also be re-elected in all Party groups.

After the plenum a report on the internal situation in the New Zealand Party Central Committee must be sent here.

The ECCI Secretariat requests that the CPA Central Committee send a responsible comrade to New Zealand for one year to assist the Party in overcoming its isolation, developing a good collective leadership in the Party and finally eliminating factional strife in it.

Document 73

RGASPI 495–20–3. October 1932, Comintern: Resolution on the situation in Australia and the immediate tasks of the party. In English, Russian, French and German versions. Typescript.

This resolution is a product of the Comintern's Twelfth Plenum in October 1932. It urges the Australian comrades to build a mass revolutionary party. The ECCI acknowledges that the Party has had some successes following the reorganization by Moore in 1930–31, but it remains isolated. In particular, the Party is criticized for its incorrect positions on the ALP and 'social fascism' in general. It orders the CPA to direct 'its main fire', not against the bourgeoisie, but against the 'social fascists', who are here depicted as the main support of the bourgeoisie.

15/10/32

Confidential

RESOLUTION ON THE SITUATION IN AUSTRALIA AND THE IMMEDIATE TASKS OF THE PARTY.

Since the XI Plenum of the ECCI, the Australian CP has been able to achieve a series of successes. There has been a considerable growth of the Party membership and of the circulation of the Party press. The Party has taken the first serious steps to reorganise its work on the basis of the factories and has succeeded in building a number of factory nuclei. The Party has commenced the building of a mass Minority Movement with groups in the factories and the reformist trade unions, and has won over a number of local branches of the reformist unions. The Party has obtained these successes in the struggle against the attack of the bourgeoisie, in the struggle against the treachery and the "Left" manoeuvres of the social-fascist politicians of the Labour Party and the TU bureaucrats, and in the struggle against the Right danger in the ranks of the Party. The Party has taken part in strike struggles and has led a number of strikes, has organised considerable sections of the unemployed in the struggle for immediate relief, against evictions, etc., and has led a number of mass actions against the fascist New Guard.

However, these successes are only the first steps to transform the Party into a mass Communist party. The Party is still isolated from the basic masses of the Australian working class. The end of the relative stabilisation of capitalism, and the development of the revolutionary upsurge still further emphasise the absolute necessity of overcoming this isolation and converting the Australian CP into a mass Bolshevik Party which will be able to prepare the working class for the revolution in Australia.

I. THE END OF CAPITALIST STABILISATION AND THE GROWTH OF THE WORKING CLASS STRUGGLE IN AUSTRALIA

2. The tremendous deepening of the world economic crisis, and especially the agrarian crisis, have hit Australian capitalism with great force, due particularly to the situation of Australia as a second-class imperialist power, and due also to the rapid fall in the prices of agricultural products which play a decisive role in the exports of Australia.

While England has preserved its dominating economic and political positions with regard to the Australian Dominion, there has been increased penetration of American capital into Australia. This together with the importance of Australia as a base in the Pacific Ocean, in case of an imperialist war, makes Australia an ever more important arena in the development of the sharpening Anglo-American struggle. Although this circumstance creates certain possibilities for the Australian bourgeoisie to manoeuvre between Great Britain and the USA on the question of loans, tariffs, etc.—not without friction at times, in the ranks of the Australian bourgeoisie—in the long run it has led to a weakening of the internal positions of the Australian bourgeoisie which has been displayed with particular clearness by the world economic crisis. The development of industrial and agrarian crisis has led to a severe financial crisis and to a fall in the exchange rate of Australian currency.

[...]

In reply to these growing international and internal contradictions of Australian capitalism, the bourgeoisie of Australia is increasing its imperialist military preparations to strengthen its position in the Pacific in face of the growing aggressiveness of Japanese imperialism and the Pacific becoming the main arena of the new world imperialist war. At the same time, with the aim of fighting Soviet exports, and in order to make ideological preparations for the active participation of Australian imperialism in the counter-revolutionary war against the USSR, the bourgeoisie, with the most active—although sometimes concealed—support of the social-fascists is increasing its campaign against the Soviet Union, the campaign of “dumping” and “forced labour”. (Bruce at the Ottawa Conference).

The war which has commenced in the Far East and tremendously increased imperialist aggressiveness, especially in the Pacific Basin, the concealed support of the Japanese invasion of Manchuria by British imperialism, the active support of the Australian bourgeoisie of the war of Japanese imperialism on the Chinese people by supplying war materials, is ever more drawing Australian imperialism into the coming imperialist war conflicts and making inevitable its participation in the developing imperialist war conflicts, and primarily in the intervention against the Soviet Union.

The whole situation of the end of capitalist stabilisation is forcing the bourgeoisie of Australia along the path of a violent solution of the ever-sharpening contradictions on the internal and international arena.

[...]

6. The growth of the revolutionary upsurge of the Australian working class has, from the other side, called forth a consolidation of bourgeois imperialist counter-revolution, as it is expressed in the growth of fascism and political reaction.

Utilising the growing dissatisfaction of the petty bourgeoisie in town and country, the bourgeoisie formed the "All for Australia" league which rapidly assumed huge proportions and made this the basis for the creation of the United Australian Party under the leadership of Lyons, the Ex-Treasurer in the Scullin Labour Government. The new Party is carrying on a more flexible policy on the question of tariffs; it has wide support in the ranks of the bourgeoisie; it has succeeded in carrying with it considerable sections of the petty bourgeoisie in town and country, and has taken over the leadership of the offensive against the working class from the Labour Governments in the federal arena and in the states of New South Wales and Victoria.

Parallel with this, the bourgeoisie has formed militant fascist organisations ("New Guard", "Silent Knights"), which openly proclaim their objective as the forceful suppression of the revolutionary organisations of the working class. However, these organisations are only one side of the growth of fascism, of the rapid transformation of the hidden dictatorship of the bourgeoisie into an open bourgeois dictatorship. The fierce attack of the Labour Government on the working class, the formation of the United Australian Party, and its coming to power, and the decision of this Government not to allow revolutionary literature to enter the country, the attack on the revolutionary press, *Workers' Weekly*, *Red Leader*, etc., the passing of anti-working class laws, the increased resort to open terror, and the growing centralisation of power in the hands of the federal government—all this marks a significant stage in the process of the growth of bourgeois "democracy" as a hidden form of dictatorship of the bourgeoisie into fascism, as the open dictatorship of the bourgeoisie.

7. The political and economic offensive of the bourgeoisie, and the part played by the Labour Party and the trade union bureaucracy in this offensive, have clearly shown up the role of social-fascism as the chief social support of the bourgeoisie. The Australian Labour Party, from the very start of the crisis, has carried on the most treacherous tactics, helping the bourgeoisie to deprive the working class and the toiling masses of their elementary economic and political gains of the past, attempting to disorganise and prevent any effort of the workers to resist the capitalist offensive, and fighting against the Communist Party and the advanced workers who were trying to form a united front of the workers in the struggle against the bourgeoisie. The Labour Government enforced wage reductions of over 25%, reduced the old-age pensions, maternity payments, reduced the miserable unemployed benefit, introduced the degrading permissible

income regulations, put a tax on the wages of employed workers, carried out brutal evictions, strengthened the arbitration system, increased the use of the police against strikes and demonstrations, etc.

[...]

8. The Party in this struggle against fascism and social-fascism has, in the main, carried on a correct line. It has mobilised the broad sections of the workers for the struggle against the capitalist offensive; it has organised the workers with considerable success for active struggle against the fascist “New Guard”, and, at the same time, has directed its main blows against the social-fascists, and, first of all, against “left” social-fascism. However, in this struggle there were many shortcomings, and a number of serious mistakes were made. In carrying on the struggle against the fascist “New Guard”, the Party did not sufficiently link up this struggle with the exposure of bourgeois democracy as a concealed form of the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie, as distinguished from fascism, which is the open form of bourgeois dictatorship, thus contrasting fascism to bourgeois democracy.

This mistake was all the more serious because in NSW where the “New Guard” is strongest, the Lang Labour Government was in office and was carrying on a sham struggle against fascism. This, in view of the incorrect position of the Party on the question of fascism, made it more difficult to expose the role which social-fascism plays in the development of fascism. “The social-fascists restrain the workers from revolutionary activity against the capitalist offensive and growing fascism, play the part of a screen behind which the fascists are able to organise their forces, and build the road for the fascist dictatorship.” (Thesis of the 12th Plenum). In Australia, this was clearly shown, for example, during the struggle of the workers in NSW against the “New Guard”, when the “left” social-fascists issued directives not to allow the members of the Australian Labour Party to participate in the united front against fascism established by the CP.

The Party did not see sufficiently clearly that the existing difference in the policy of fascism and social-fascism is a difference in methods. “Both fascism and social-fascism stand for the maintenance and the strengthening of capitalism and the bourgeois dictatorship, but from this position they each adopt different tactical views.” (Thesis of the 12th Plenum). While the fascists chiefly use open attacks and terror to overcome the resistance of the working class, at the same time developing social and nationalist demagogy, the social-fascists make more use of phrases about socialism, democracy, etc., behind which they proceed to disorganise the struggle of the workers, using, at the same time, also open terror against the working class, at moments of special acuteness of the class struggle.

While explaining to the working class the nature of fascism and social-fascism, the Party must not fall into the opposite mistake, which it has done sometimes, when, in attempting to rectify its previous mistake, it has put fascism and

social-fascism into one category. The Party must carefully explain the specific role of each of them in preserving the dictatorship of capital.

[...]

There was also an incorrect tendency to declare the Labour Party to be the chief enemy of the working class. As the decisions of the CI point out, the chief enemy of the working class is the bourgeoisie. But social-fascism is the main social support of the bourgeoisie. In order to defeat the bourgeoisie, the CP must destroy its chief social support—social-fascism. Therefore, the CP, in the period of preparation and unfoldment of revolution, must direct its main fire against social-fascism.

[...]

II. THE IMMEDIATE TASKS OF THE PARTY.

10. The growing revolutionary upsurge of the working class raises before the CPA the task of organising and leading the masses in the struggle against the bourgeois offensive for their immediate demands, on questions of wages, unemployed relief, unemployed insurance and social insurance, the defence of workers' organisations, against political reaction and fascism, against imperialist war, in defence of the USSR and the Chinese Revolution. The Party must strive to develop and enlarge this struggle, raising it to a higher stage of the MASS POLITICAL STRIKE.

[...]

12. The basic prerequisite for the fulfillment of the tasks of the Party, for combatting and defeating the chief enemy of the proletarian revolution inside the working class—social-fascism—is the concentration of the whole Party for everyday work in the factories, the firm rooting of the Party in the factories, mines etc. The experience already obtained in the penetration into the factories, and the construction of factory nuclei, must be widely discussed in the Party press, in the Party committees and nuclei. This experience must be utilised in the building of new factory nuclei and for activising the work of the weak and badly working nuclei. The leading committees must carefully check up on the work of the factory nuclei, giving them personal assistance and leadership in their work.

[...]

The Party nuclei must work illegally in order to prevent the employers driving the communists and revolutionary workers out of the factories (see directives in the Org. letter). This does not mean that the work in the factories must be narrowed down or weakened. On the contrary, it demands that the members of the Party, by forming various committees, workers circles, etc., such as factory committees, committees of action, sport clubs, dramatic clubs, etc., and by work

inside the trade unions and any organisations of the workers which are under the influence of the employers or the social-fascists, must extend their activity winning ever more workers for the struggle in the factories, and thus extend and consolidate the influence of the factory nuclei, whilst at the same time protecting and maintaining the members of the Party and the revolutionary workers in the factories against the terror of the employers and police.

[...]

Recently the Party has carried on considerable work in the trade unions, but at the same time the instructions of the letters of 1929–30 to the CP of A, and also the decisions of the XI Plenum of the CI on the question of the leading role of the CP in the sphere of the construction and leadership of the Minority Movement, have up to the present only been very slightly carried out, which is expressed in the very small percentage (15%) of Party members who take part in the work of the MM. The XII Plenum emphasised this weakness with regard to all sections of the CI, and still more decisively pointed out that one of the chief tasks of the CPs is the strengthening of their work among the non-Party workers and the reformist workers.

[...]

16. The chief condition for the success of the work of the Party is the rallying of the members of the Party in the struggle on two fronts, against right opportunism as the main danger, and against left sectarianism, for the general Party line.

In the struggle against opportunism, the Party has brought about a considerable consolidation of its ranks. But, as was shown by the right opportunist mistakes in the miners' strike in Lithgow, the capitulation of Moxon to the TU bureaucrats (Melbourne), manifestations of opportunist passivity in a number of Party organisations, and sectarian mistakes in strikes (ignoring the everyday demands of the workers in Party work), this struggle against the right and "left" deviations is the main prerequisite for the development of the Party. The struggle against opportunism in the Party must be carried on in the form of a wide ideological campaign throughout the Party, exposing the roots of all deviations, and explaining the need for an energetic struggle for the correct Bolshevik line. On this basis must be carried on a Bolshevik consolidation of the Party and the raising of the ideological level *and* the political vigilance of the Party members.

The CC must take steps to develop in all the work of the Party real Bolshevik self-criticism, using this to help the Party members and the Party organisations to understand and overcome the mistakes which have been made in Party work, and to improve all the work of the Party.

[...]

21. The sharpening of the class struggle raises sharply before the Party the question of the threatening danger of the suppression of the Party and illegality. Preparations must be made for the Party to go underground in case of necessity, without losing its contacts with the masses. The Party must carry on the reorganisation of the existing clumsy Party committees. In the factories, particularly in the war factories, on the railroads, in ports, etc., the Party nuclei must carry on their work on an illegal basis, using at the same time the widest and most varied forms of mass work.

III. THE STRUGGLE AGAINST WAR AND FOR A REVOLUTIONARY WAY OUT OF THE CRISIS.

23. One of the chief shortcomings in the work of the Party has been the weakness of its campaign against the danger of imperialist war and intervention in the Soviet Union. The resolution on the war danger adopted by XII Plenum of the ECCI states:

The XII Plenum of the ECCI considers it to be the chief task of all the CPs to organise and lead the struggle of the workers and peasants and all the toilers for the defence of China and for the defence of the USSR against the intervention which is approaching, and in defence of the toilers of capitalist countries against a new imperialist war.

The anti-Soviet policy of the Australian bourgeoisie, its role as one of the detachments of British imperialism in the struggle against the revolutionary movement in the colonies, makes it essential for the CPA to bring about a determined mobilisation of the broadest masses of workers and toilers in defence of the USSR, in defence of China.

The chief shortcoming in carrying out this task of the Australian Party has been the fact that it has reacted too slowly to the events in the Far East, and that the propaganda and the agitation of the Party have had a very abstract character. Very few attempts were made to expose concretely the war preparations of Australian imperialism. The Party has not linked up its anti-war propaganda with the everyday economic and political questions which are agitating the masses.

With this is connected the failure of the Party to organise any kind of strike on water transport to prevent the delivery of war materials to Japanese imperialism and to develop a really broad mass movement and mass activity against imperialist war in defence of China, in defence of the Soviet Union.

The rapid increase of the danger of a new imperialist war and intervention against the Soviet Union makes it obligatory for the CPA to increase its anti-war activity.

[...]

The Party must mobilise the broad masses of the employed and unemployed workers in a mass struggle against this plan of the imperialists and the social-fascists. The Party must much more widely popularise the construction of socialism and the classless society in the USSR, linking this up with the struggle against the danger of imperialist intervention in the USSR, and with the propaganda of the Party, for a revolutionary way out of the crisis. The Party must show to the workers that the dictatorship of the proletariat in Australia on the basis of an alliance of the working class with the poor and middle farmers, by the formation of planned economy, will solve the problem of unemployment, the agrarian crisis, will raise the standard of life of the workers and toiling masses, will develop the broadest proletarian democracy, and will open up the path for the construction of a classless society. All this must have the aim of bringing about the broadest mobilisation of the masses for an immediate struggle and must prepare the conditions for the inevitable decisive struggle for the victorious proletarian revolution, for the dictatorship of the proletariat in Australia.

Document 74

RGASPI 495–94–104. 22 October 1933, Freier: memo: On the situation in Australia. In Russian, French and German; typescript. Trans. from the Russian by KW.

In early 1933, Adolf Hitler came to power in Germany, and the analysis of ‘social fascism’ was finally and tragically revealed as bunkum. In this memo on the Australian situation, Freier argues that the ALP is collapsing, and that the CPA has perhaps the best opportunity of any communist party in the world to reach out to the working class, yet it is failing to realize those opportunities. Having analysed the Party’s Central Committee minutes, Freier finds that ‘the Party leadership, while committing no serious political errors, is too dogmatic in its approach to all matters, too non-specific in its decisions’; he recommends that the Comintern send an ‘instructor’ to Australia. This, however, does not seem to have eventuated.

Freier: Australian Situation

Dictated 22 October, 1933

Most secret

Memorandum of the Anglo-American Secretariat for the Political Commission. To Comrade Lozovsky.²⁰

On the Situation in Australia

Despite another cut in wages, a reduction in unemployment benefits and the introduction of compulsory public work in exchange for these benefits (work for the dole), no strong strike movement has been seen in Australia this year. The primary reason for this is the policy of the reformist trade unions, which

²⁰ These two lines in handwriting.

have distracted the workers' attention from direct struggle against the employers and the government towards petitions and the arbitration courts. For their part, the latter support the reformist policy of the unions and manoeuvre adroitly in matters of wages, raising them in isolated cases for limited categories of workers and lowering them sharply for the largest categories. Recent Australian newspapers have provided a most striking example. This season wool prices have gone up by 45 per cent over last year (owing to increased purchases by Japan). However, the shearers' bid to have their former wage level restored was rejected by the arbitration court on the grounds that (1) nobody knows whether the increase will last, and (2) a 45 per cent price rise does not guarantee that graziers will receive their 'legitimate' profit. The reformists have lately resorted to new manoeuvres. They declare their support for the strike movement, while backing only those claims which affect broad masses of workers, i.e. in practice supporting general strikes. For example, the reformists in Melbourne launched a slogan about preparing for a general strike to make good a ten per cent pay reduction that affected 300,000 workers.²¹ In this way the reformists block all partial and local workers' strikes. But at the same time, this new manoeuvre by the reformists demonstrates that a watershed has been reached in the working masses and that all illusions concerning the possibility of securing pay rises through the arbitration courts are losing ground.

Crucial to an understanding of the present situation in Australia is the process of collapse in progress in the ranks of the Labor Party. The clearest manifestation of this process can be seen in New South Wales. In this state, the Labor Party under Lang, which came to power²² last year and has split from Federal Labor, remains the strongest political organization among the workers. But within Lang's Labor Party a trend by the name of 'socialization nuclei' has formed in recent years. These have drawn in the most revolutionary elements from the ranks of the workers who are members of that party. Up to this year, these 'socialization nuclei' were engaged mostly in self-education and discussion of the conditions necessary to implement various kinds of socializing projects that figure in the Labor Party programme, and so on. This year in the 'socialization nuclei' discontent with Lang's reformist policy has risen sharply. At a number of conferences the leaders of the socialization movement have been obliged to speak out against Lang and company. The latter, in turn, have implemented a series of disciplinary measures against the 'socialization nuclei', with the aim of restricting their autonomy and bringing them fully under control.

As a result, within the 'socialization nuclei' themselves a division is now taking shape between those who support determined revolutionary policies and those who are loath to leave the Labor Party. While the number of members in

²¹ The figure here is not clearly legible.

²² Russian corrected by hand to 'was in power'.

the ‘socialization nuclei’ is unknown, there is no doubt that these events have very great significance for the work of our party. As was absolutely correctly pointed out at a session of the CPA Politburo, ‘It is very important that our party should understand that in the elements which are emerging from the “socialization nuclei” we have new cadres for our Party, workers who are the best elements of the Labour Party, energetic and active. If we succeed in drawing them into the Party, we shall acquire the best elements that we need.’

In addition to the revolutionizing of the socialization movement, there are other indications of the collapse of the Labor Party. The Australian comrades calculate that in the last two and a half years the membership of the Australian Workers’ Union has fallen by at least half. This union is the central bulwark of the markedly right-wing Federal Labor Party. The number of members leaving the Labor Party is rising. At a Politburo meeting, some comrades counted roughly 1,400 departures in only three districts in the last six months.²³ The number of local Labor Party and trade union organizations that accept a united front with the communists is growing, despite their leaders’ threats. In one district, for example, during parliamentary elections, the workers raised an election fund which they decided to share equally between the Labor Party and the Communist Party.

The movement against war, organized and led by the Party, has achieved particular success. According to an outdated report read to the Politburo on 27 May, 37 anti-war committees had been set up. Two local branches of the Labor Party went into voluntary liquidation and declared themselves anti-war committees. According to reports in the bourgeois press, over fifty trade unions affiliated to Lang’s party have put their signatures to a demand that the municipality grant the use of the town hall for an anti-war conference. (It was supposed to be held in late September, but there is no information on it as yet.) About sixty local branches of Lang’s Labor Party decided to support the movement against war and many of them selected delegates to the conference. The following note, which appeared in *The Sydney Morning Herald* on 7 September, is of particular interest.

Fearing further revolts within their party, the leaders of the Garden-Graves faction have decided to modify their attitude towards the forthcoming conference of the anti-war movement. At a recent meeting of the Lang executive it was decided to forbid any member of the [Lang Labor] party to attend the conference under the penalty of expulsion. The conference, it was held, was a bogus movement of Communist origin. Now, however, the leaders have advised members that they cannot represent Labour leagues at the gathering, but they will be allowed to represent unions. The decision is regarded as a further

²³ The figure here is not clearly legible.

capitulation by the ruling faction to their extreme followers, who had made it clear that they intended to be present at the gathering.²⁴

How is the Communist Party exploiting the favourable situation which has arisen? The CPA has opportunities probably unequalled by any communist party in the world to reach reformist labour organizations. In Sydney there is a labour council and a central committee of rank-and-file workers, which forms part of the reformist trade union movement. Among the membership of these bodies are communists and workers who are prepared to work under the leadership of the Party. Local workers' organizations often invite communists to give lectures etc. The Party, however, does not make sufficient use of these opportunities. At Politburo meetings complaints have often been heard that the party masses have not been mobilized for work with the 'socialization nuclei', that they do not understand the importance of what is happening in the ranks of the Labor Party. The Minority Movement is making no progress; members are quitting the Australian Workers' Union by the thousand. Our Pastoral Workers' Industrial Union²⁵ has only 500 members. The Friends of the USSR and the League Against Imperialism are faring miserably. Work among the unemployed has slackened, although Party agitation to raise unemployment benefits is beginning to bear fruit and the struggle of the unemployed is intensifying. The anti-war movement has become a popular movement, even the most popular movement among Australian workers. The Party, however, is not taking advantage of it to step up Party and trade union work. In the meantime, a mass of reformists and liberal pacifists are penetrating the movement. The Party leadership is aware of the danger, but has no clear idea how to combat it.

The existing materials are quite insufficient for an all-round appraisal of the Party's work. The general impression created by the Politburo minutes is that the Party leadership, while committing no serious political errors, is too dogmatic in its approach to all matters, too non-specific in its decisions and does not show the Party organs HOW they should implement those decisions, confining itself to general directives. It is typical, for example, that, while discussing the recruitment of members and matters of trade union work, the Politburo has never discussed specifics of the work of individual nuclei or minority groups.

A new resolution or letter from the Comintern will hardly set matters right. The far-reaching resolutions adopted last year and the appraisal by the Party plenum set forth in *Inprecorr*²⁶ will suffice as general directives. *These directives, in particular those regarding improvements to the newspaper, have mostly not been implemented as yet.*²⁷ For more focused directives, (a) there is insufficient material,

²⁴ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 7 September 1933, p. 12.

²⁵ The PWIU was formed by communists as a breakaway union from the AWU in 1930.

²⁶ The usual acronym for the Comintern's journal, *International Press Correspondence*.

²⁷ Sentence inserted by hand.

and (b) it is six months old by the time it reaches Australia. The tragedy of the leading Australian comrades is that, while ardently wishing to operate in a revolutionary fashion, they lack the experience to make sense of the truly complex situation caused by the collapse of the Labor Party, although this collapse was in no small measure precipitated by the work of the Communist Party.

In order to resolve the complex questions now confronting the Australian Party, what the latter now needs most is lively leadership. For this reason, the most expedient decision would be to send an instructor. Pacific affairs, the development of events in the Far East, and the importance of Australia as a base for our work in the East in the event of war constitute an additional argument in support of such a decision.

B. Freier

Document 75

RGASPI 495–94–114. 1934?, ?Billet (Anglo-American Secretariat): report: Socialist Construction in the Soviet Union: Australian material. Typescript.

This is an analysis for the Anglo-American Secretariat of the Australian Party's propaganda on behalf of the Soviet Union, and its shortcomings. It also describes other newspapers in Australia that have been used by communists to spread positive images of socialist construction in the USSR.

22.6.34

SOCIALIST CONSTRUCTION IN THE SOVIET UNION Australian Material.

Party Press Propaganda.

Propaganda articles dealing with various phases of socialist construction in the Soviet Union appear regularly in the Communist Party press of Australia. These articles give prominence to the success of the first Five Year Plan and marvellous strides being made in the fulfilment of the Second Five Year Plan.²⁸

Considerable use has been made of the descriptive accounts of events, and the sights seen by members of the workers' delegations which toured the Soviet Union from Australia and other countries.

The lies and distortions appearing in the bourgeois and Labour party press concerning "authentic" information supplied by some enemy of the working class who is stated to have journeyed through the Soviet Union and seen things "first hand" is rebutted with a truthful account of what is really transpiring in the first Workers' Republic.

²⁸ The First Five-year Plan was 1928–33; the Second Five-year Plan was 1933–38.

Party Press Propaganda Shortcomings.

While a fairly good coordinated account of the planned socialist construction now being effected is published in the Party organs, there is a noticeable failure to contrast the situation of the life of the workers and poor farmers in Australia with that of the workers and peasants of the Soviet Union.

There is lacking in the Party press articles comparing the misery and poverty of the 400,000 unemployed who exist on a mere pittance of a dole or are forced to labour in camps for their food, to the position of the workers in the Soviet Union, where unemployment has been abolished, and where there is in fact a shortage of labour.

Similar comparisons are lacking concerning the life of the factory workers in Australia, who suffer wage cuts, long hours, and worsened conditions, to that of the workers in the Soviet Union whose standard of living is steadily rising.

These omissions would tend to impart an abstract appearance to the propaganda published in the Party press, instead of it being of such a character that would interest the workers and arouse them to actively participate in the struggle against the employers for improved wages and conditions, and draw them into the revolutionary movement and the struggle for Soviet power.

The Attitude of the Reformist Leadership.

Due to the favourable attitude shown towards the Soviet Union by tens of thousands of its members and supporters, the ALP (*Australian Labour Party*) press and politicians adopt a very guarded and at times seemingly sympathetic attitude towards socialist construction in the Soviet Union. The point of view expressed by some of the reformist leaders is to faintly praise the situation in the Soviet Union at the same time stressing the point that all these and other accomplishments can be obtained through parliamentary democracy. That, while the use of revolutionary methods may have been necessary to overthrow the Czarist Despotism, the more literate and cultured Australian workers can attain their goal constitutionally and peacefully by using the democratic franchise.

Lang, the "Left"²⁹ Reformist leader in New South Wales, who is yet very popular with tens of thousands of workers, has not over a period of years made an attack upon the Soviet Union. He has on a number of occasions strongly condemned dictatorships, *both* "Russian and fascist". Lang and other reformist leaders strive to confuse the workers by creating the impression that there is no fundamental difference between a fascist dictatorship and the dictatorship of the proletariat, which is the widest form of democracy.

On the other hand there is Garden, the secretary of the New South Wales Labour Council, a close associate of Lang and powerful figure in the trade union

²⁹ Quotation marks have been inserted by hand.

movement and Labour Party, who, in his public utterances both at meetings and in debates unstintingly praises the progress being made in the Soviet Union. At the same time while Garden speaks in this strain he speaks slightly of the Communist Party, and has stated that “Lang is greater than Stalin”, that the program of the Lang party is more constructive and more suitable for the working class than the program of the German Communist Party as enunciated by Comrade Thaelman [sic; Thälmann].

It is quite evident that Garden’s intentions are directed with the object of retaining the thousands of members of the ALP who are favorably disposed towards the Soviet Union from leaving the Labour party and joining the revolutionary movement.

The *Labour Daily*, the official organ of “left”³⁰ reformists in New South Wales, has from time to time in its weekly supplements published articles dealing with socialist construction in the Soviet Union *showing an objective attitude towards the USSR*. Appearing on the same page are articles by the foremost “theoretician” of the ALP who writes under the name of Solomon Briggs, who distorts the writings of Marx, Lenin and Stalin in the most impudent fashion. In his praise for the Roosevelt plan, Solomon Briggs ridicules the idea that planned production is not possible under capitalism.

[...]

Commencing from about February 1934, the *West Australian* which has the largest circulation of all the papers of West Australia, published a series of articles written by Katherine Suzannah Pritchard [sic], the well known Australian novelist, who recently toured the Soviet Union. A reprint of these articles appeared in a Melbourne paper which likewise has a considerable circulation. These articles contain splendid information, giving a very vivid account of the situation in the Soviet Union, as this short extract will show.

[...]

Although the *Newcastle Morning Herald* is unfavourably disposed towards the Soviet Union, it nevertheless throws open its columns to workers’ correspondents, and has published without deletion articles on socialist construction in the Soviet Union and the work of the Communist Party. The fact that Newcastle, the second largest city in New South Wales, is predominantly working class, is undoubtedly the reason which actuates this bourgeois paper in adopting this liberal attitude.

The same is also true of a number of provincial papers, especially those circulating in mining and other working class towns. The Party is certainly open

³⁰ Quotation marks have been inserted by hand.

to criticism for not making best use of the opportunity presented by supplying a regular stream of material to these papers.

[...]

Document 76

RGASPI 495–94–121. 17 July 1935, Billet (Anglo-American Secretariat): letter: Dear Friends. Typescript.

The Anglo-American Secretariat here recommends that Katharine Susannah Prichard be used to 'conduct work among the intellectuals, petty-bourgeoisie, etc., and should not be brought to the forefront as a Party member and activist', which might diminish her ability to contribute to the communist cause. Implicit in this letter is the notion that while Prichard should work within her circles as a 'friend' of the Soviet Union, she should not appear as a Communist.

July 17th, 1935.

Dear Friends

[...]

There is still another matter requiring attention. This is in reference to the work of Katherine Susanna Prichard [sic]. Being a Party member, the responsible Party Committee should decide which sphere of revolutionary activity she is to engage in. It has been decided that Comrade Prichard is to devote her energies to antiwar and anti-fascist activities, and to the Writers' League. Being one of the foremost writers in Australia, with also a world reputation, a fact even admitted by bourgeois critics, Comrade Prichard should be prominently used to conduct work among the intellectuals, petty-bourgeoisie, etc., and should not be brought to the forefront as a Party member and activist, as was the cause in the *Red Star* of May 3rd, where it is stated that Comrade Prichard made the following declaration at a public meeting on May 1st: "Comrade Throssel said that she was proud to have been a member of the Party since its inception, in Australia". Again, in the June 7th issue, there is published a front page appeal by Comrade Prichard on behalf of the *Workers' Weekly*. To utilise the services of Com Prichard in this fashion, will, under the present conditions in Australia, have a tendency to impair the important work she is best suited for.

Billet.

Document 77

RGASPI 495–94–121. 8 August 1935, L Sharkey: letter: To secretariat ECCI. Typescript.

In this letter to Moscow, Sharkey proposed that because of the Australian Customs ban on the importation of communist literature, and the desirability of Australian communists

becoming acquainted with Comintern decisions, the ECCI endorse the notion (and perhaps ultimately funding) of an Australian edition of *Inprecorr*.

STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL.

Aug. 8, 1935.

Secretariat ECCI.

Dear Comrades,

It is very essential that the members of the Party, especially the leading cadres and functionaries, be acquainted with all the experiences of the Comintern, its policy and tactics. This is particularly necessary now in view of the 7th Congress decisions and the further extension of our united front tactics, and their working out by the various Sections.

In view of the fact that not one copy of the CI Magazine has reached Australia for several years because the Federal Government has placed a ban upon the importation of "seditious" literature, it is very essential to overcome this ban by printing and publishing an Australian edition of the CI Magazine.

Were such an edition published in Australia, we feel confident that we could sell at least 1,500 copies monthly, if sold at 3d per copy, which is the price of the English edition. It is very likely, however, that the magazine could not be sold for less than 6d per copy if the cost of production is to be realised.

It is difficult from here for the Australian delegation to work out a precise estimate of the cost of producing 1,000 copies of the CI Magazine, but we consider that it would approximately cost at least 40 English pounds per month.

The difficulties of sending the material to Australia could be overcome by forwarding it to London, and then air-mailing to cover addresses in Sydney, taking, in all, about 15 days to reach its destination.

We make the request that the Secretariat endorse the principle of publishing an Australian edition of the journal, and allow us to work out later precise details as to the cost of production.

L. Sharkey

Document 78

RGASPI 495–20–828. 27 May 1936, S. Mason letter: to Dimitrov. In Russian, typescript (the script indicates 'From the English by Kup[iskoj]', but the English version is not located in CAAL). Trans. by KW.

This brief letter is included because it gives an indication of how the Comintern directed its parties, by preparing and approving resolutions in Moscow, and then sending them to parties for adoption at Central Committee or Congress level. 'Mason' was the pseudonym of an Australian communist whose real identity remains unknown. J.B. Miles had used the pseudonym, but was not at this stage in the USSR.

27 May, 1936

Secret

Comrade Dimitrov,

I enclose the text of the proposals for the Australian party drafted by a committee comprising Com. Ribi [phon] (Australia), Com. Arnot (England)³¹ and myself.

I would like to have them endorsed or amended so as to be able to dispatch them to Australia.

I recommend sending the proposals by air mail.

S. Mason

Representative of the CP of Australia.

Document 79

RGASPI 495-14-305. late 1936/early 1937, S. Mason: report to ECCI: Information to Secretariat of ECCI re Trotskyism in Australia. Typescript.

From the late 1920s, after he was expelled from the Soviet Union, Trotsky was able to publicize a relatively coherent critique—based on advocating Leninism and opposing Stalin(ism)—both of the Soviet regime and of the Comintern’s policies. Its fundamental position, however, was continued support for the world’s first ‘workers’ state’, despite its ‘degeneration’. This view attracted a number of dissident or disaffected communists around the world, who established oppositional communist parties and eventually joined together as the ‘Fourth International’ in 1938. These parties were generally very small, the strongest being in the United States. In Australia, former communists established the Workers’ Party of Australia (Left Opposition) in 1933. Though never an effective challenge to the Comintern-endorsed Communist Parties, the Trotskyists were a constant thorn in their side, and Stalin himself would not rest until Trotsky himself had been murdered. Trotskyists, too, were murdered wherever Communists had a chance, particularly in the Soviet Union itself and in Spain during the Spanish Civil War (1936–39). Moscow’s fear of Trotskyist influence meant that its parties were required to report on Trotskyism in their countries. This document is one such report. It gives the background and some of the activities of the Trotskyists in Australia, though the reporter, Mason, admits that he has been away from Australia for some time.

17.1.37

INFORMATION TO SECRETARIAT OF ECCI RE TROTSKYISM IN AUSTRALIA

A Trotskyist group first showed itself, as such, early in 1933. It was composed of a small group of renegades who had been expelled for carrying on a fractional

³¹ R.P. Arnot (1890–1968) was a founding member of the CPGB in 1920. A member of the Party’s Central Committee, he was arrested in 1925 in the lead up to the General Strike and charged with ‘incitement to mutiny’; he served 6 months in prison. He authored a 2-volume *Short History of the Russian Revolution* (1937).

struggle against the Party in the latter half of 1932. It was led by a Professor Anderson, professor of philosophy at Sydney University. He has never been a member of the Party, although having connections with us up to the middle of 1931.

The Trotskyists only succeeded in establishing organisations in Sydney and Melbourne. At its strongest in 1934, it could only succeed in getting 22 members in Sydney.

During 1934 they issued first a roneoed and then a printed monthly paper, which collapsed and ceased publication at the beginning of 1935.

During 1934 they also attempted to organise one weekly lecture. The attendance was small, made up in the main of armchair philosophers and Party members who went there to interrupt.

During 1934 they attempted to penetrate the organised labor movement with the concealed help of the Labor Party leadership and a section of trade union officials. This took the form of attempting to establish a Relief Workers' Union in opposition to the Unemployed and Relief Workers' Councils led by the Party, with the aim of it becoming affiliated to the Sydney Trades and Labor Council. The Party mobilised the unemployed and relief workers to the Trades Hall where they repudiated the Trotskyists, forcing the Labor Party and trade union leaders to disown them.

They also attempted to penetrate into an International Labor Defence and Annual Unemployed Conference during 1934. In the first instance they never had credentials and were refused admittance. In the second instance a couple got in but were thrown out by the conference.

In 1935, one Trotskyist got credentials from a relief job and attended the annual Unemployed and Relief Workers' Conference. He was exposed there and left before the Conference finished.

Prior to 1934 they had been in the recognised unemployed movement but were driven out and in Sydney only succeeded in maintaining contact with two unemployed locals which, under their influence went out of existence whilst at the same time we built two new locals with them outside. In a couple of centres in Melbourne they had contact with unemployed locals.

In 1935 they again attempted to penetrate the organised labour movement through the Committee for Defence of Democratic Rights. Again we succeeded in having them repudiated.

During 1935 they attempted to hold Sunday meetings in the Sydney Domain in opposition to our position on sanctions re Abyssinia. In this they secured an ally in Kavanagh, ex-General Secretary of Party and leader of 1929 right wing, who had been finally expelled from the Party earlier in 1935 for Trotskyist

smuggling. But whilst we were getting big meetings, theirs turned into a fiasco and were finally abandoned.

At the end of 1935 their activity was almost negligible. Their paper ceased publication, their public weekly lectures in Sydney were abandoned. The only activity we knew of was that of one individual on a relief job and steps were being taken to combat him there. This person had about six people grouped around him in the suburb where he lived.

Since being here [in Moscow] the only activity of theirs which I have been able to note through the press is as follows:

First, Professor Anderson gave a broadcast talk over the air on the recent trial of the terrorists here.³² One of our members, recently returned from Moscow as a delegate at the invitation of the broadcasting station, also spoke on the same subject a few nights earlier.

Secondly, they issued a leaflet concerning the trial of the terrorists.

The only international contacts they had, of which we know, was contact with the Trotskyists of the USA.

Outside of Anderson's contacts, we had no information of direct contact with the bourgeoisie, nor of direct contact with the police. However, in 1933, when the Party was threatened with illegality and our general secretary was underground, these scoundrels informed the police through their paper.

At the present time the Party does not mention them in its press, i.e. the Australian Trotskyists. It has carried on a consistent and aggressive policy against them in relation to the recent trial here and at a recent meeting of the Central Committee passed a resolution calling upon the Party for vigilance against any Trotskyist or semi-Trotskyist tendencies which may express themselves in the organised labour movement.

I have been away from Australia too long to know the concrete situation relating to their present activity and organisation, therefore I cannot make any additional concrete proposals for the struggle against them.

Greetings,
S. Mason,
Australian Representative

³² Mason probably refers to the second (of three) show trials held in Moscow against the Old Bolsheviks who were accused of plotting to restore capitalism in Russia. The main defendants of the first trial, held in August 1936, were Grigory Zinoviev and Lev Kamenev; Radek, with sixteen others, was tried and found guilty in January 1937 at the second trial. Most of those tried were executed.