

# *SL Absence Marks End of Era* **Keylor Upholds Class-Struggle Program in ILWU**

For the first time in over a dozen years, the Spartacist League (SL) will have no supporters on the Executive Board of San Francisco Local 10 of the International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union (ILWU). Stan Gow, a supporter of the SL and its predecessor, the Revolutionary Tendency (a faction in the Socialist Workers Party), did not file for reelection last January, giving up a post he had held for 13 years. Gow's surrender of an elected post in the most political local of this strategic union marks the end of an era for the SL.

During the 1970's the SL, alone among the ostensible Trotskyist organizations, built class-struggle caucuses based programmatically on the Transitional Program in a number of important industrial unions. In the Communication Workers of America (CWA—telephone workers) and the ILWU, SL-supported caucuses became the recognized opposition to the class-collaborationist trade-union bureaucrats. Both caucuses had a stable and growing base of support with members elected consistently to local executive boards and as convention delegates.

In 1981 the SL-supported Militant Caucus (MC) held three executive board posts in warehouse Local 6 and two more in longshore Local 10. Today it holds none. This is directly attributable to the SL leadership's loss of political confidence in its ability to implant the Trotskyist program in the working class and its decision to withdraw its cadre from the unions. SL guru James Robertson feared that trade unionists who succeeded in building even a small mass base might some day pose an effective opposition to his increasingly bureaucratic control of the organization. To forestall such a development, the SL tops turned on their leading trade-union supporters (e.g., Jane Margolis, Bob Mandel and Howard Keylor). In almost all cases they were driven from their elected union posts and often from their jobs.

Keylor, a founding member of the MC in 1974 and co-editor of the *Longshore Militant*, came under fire from the SL leadership in 1981 because of his opposition to SL members flying during the air traffic controllers' strike and his fight against the bureaucratic suppression of political differences in the SL. He was ordered by the Militant Caucus to abandon his elected posts as a local executive board member and as a local convention delegate. He refused to participate in wrecking the work in longshore and so was forced to break with the caucus. When he ran for office on the same class-struggle pro-

gram which he had upheld in the MC, the SL and its supporters embarked on a hysterical, lying campaign of vilification to try to defeat him.

But it didn't work. Despite the SL and MC slanders, the longshoremen continued to elect Keylor to the Local 10 Executive Board and, in 1984, to the longshore division contract caucus. In that body Keylor succeeded in getting a number of class-struggle resolutions on the floor for consideration.

Gow's increasing sectarianism led him to abandon running on a class-struggle transitional program. Instead he campaigned on a maximum program of proletarian revolution while devoting much of his time to slandering Keylor. This bizarre sectarianism reached its height in 1984 when, for six days, Gow *opposed* a longshoremen's boycott of South African cargo. (The reason was that Keylor had been the initiator of the action.) With the connivance of his friends in the SL, Gow knowingly published an account of internal union decisions which provided the waterfront bosses with "Exhibit 1" for the federal court injunction used to crush this historic political strike. Gow's shameful behavior led to a drop in his vote in both the 1985 and 1986 union elections.

This year Keylor again won a seat on the executive board. As in the past, he campaigned on a full transitional program. He opposed the employers' demands for concessions (aimed at undermining the hiring hall, eliminating historic gains such as travel-time allowance and deregistering partially disabled longshoremen) and exposed the capitulationist, bureaucratic leadership of the International. He raised calls for international labor solidarity and working-class action to stop Reagan's war drive and opposed protectionist trade sanctions, government-employer strikebreaking and Nazi-Klan terror. The final point of Keylor's program called for a break with the Democrats and Republicans and the construction of a workers party based on the unions to fight for a workers government.

The political bandits who run the increasingly cultist Spartacist League were unsuccessful in driving Keylor out of principled trade-union politics, but the confusion and demoralization they spread among the longshoremen, who had previously supported the MC, set back the work and aborted the coalescing of a class-struggle caucus in longshore. Today the political continuity of revolutionary trade union work in the ILWU is represented solely by Keylor and the *Militant Longshoreman*.■