

SL's Cop-Baiting Celebrity **'Powerful Testimony'...** **to the Police**

Last summer in the aftermath of the brutal incineration of eleven black people in a MOVE commune in Philadelphia, the Spartacist League (SL) sponsored a forum in New York featuring two relatives of the victims. One of the featured speakers, LaVerne Sims, used the opportunity to quote from the deranged rantings of MOVE's founder, John Africa. The New York local of the SL sat attentively in their chairs as Sims quoted John Africa to the effect that "Guilt is the agent of plague to this system, and the section is you all's tools to get around you all's disasters."

In its capacity as convenor of a memorial meeting for the MOVE victims the SL thought it impolitic to differ with its guests. Accordingly SL speakers confined their remarks to denouncing the authors of the hideous massacre on Osage Avenue and advocating the struggle for socialism via construction of a mass-based Spartacist League.

The convivial atmosphere was spoiled by a representative of the small Shachtmanite League for a Revolutionary Party (LRP) who raised a few (mainly erroneous) political criticisms of the SL. He also suggested that the SL was opportunistically covering up its differences with MOVE. Spartacist spokesman Ed Kartsen indignantly replied that the SL had in fact "openly and freely" discussed its differences with MOVE—in private.

LaVerne Sims responded to the LRP intervention in her summary with a vicious cop-baiting smear:

"...we were taught by John Africa that when a person gets up in those demonstrations and they're saying something different than what we're saying, that oftentimes they are plants. And they are planted there to cause dissension among the people who are trying to do what is right. To the [LRP] gentleman up there, you know, I can recognize the signs when I see them....I really would like to know why *you* are here. More to the point, we had a MOVE brother, so-called, who was in the MOVE organization, calling himself our brother, who turned informant against John Africa. So we already know about people and what

they will and won't do."

—*Workers Vanguard (WV)*, 26 July 1985

After the meeting, by *WV's* own account, the LRPer "incredibly came back in demanding that we uphold his purported honor as a socialist" against Sims' attack. "He wanted us to have to escort him out, which we did" the SL concluded smugly. The LRPer in question is a long-time leftist well known to the SL. He is what the Spartacist League used to designate as an "honest revisionist." The fact that *WV* finds it "incredible" that he expected the SL to have the decency to disavow Sims' cop-baiting (and even brags about ejecting him from the premises) should tell an unprejudiced observer plenty about the brand of "Trotskyism" being retailed from the headquarters on Warren Street these days.

In an obvious attempt to deflect mounting criticism of his role in the grisly terror-bombing last May, Philadelphia's black mayor Wilson Goode set up a commission to "investigate" it. LaVerne Sims was among those who testified on the third day of the hearings. The 11 October *New York Times* reported that:

"In a July 1984 meeting with Mayor Goode, Mrs. Sims said she 'begged and pleaded' that he order the police to take MOVE members and their children into custody while they were on the street.

"'I saw that as a solution to wither down the force,' said Mrs. Sims...."

WV covered the follow-up to the Philadelphia massacre and even reported on "the powerful testimony of Louise James and her sister LaVerne Sims" at Goode's hearings (1 November 1985). Curiously there was no mention of Sims' "powerful" pleas to have the cops round up MOVE members. Maybe the *WV* ed board missed the *Times* that day. Or perhaps this too is something which the SL thinks is best raised privately. We suspect that John Africa would have been more forthright. ■