Anton Pannekoek to J.A. Dawson
(Extracts from a letter - early 1947)

[The following text is that of J.A. Dawsons containing extracts from Pannekoeks letter in citation marks]
The Council Communist Archive: http://kurasje.tripod.com

A recent letter from Dr. Anton Pannekoek contains such sound logic that I feel it should be passed along to all workers seeking the way to emancipation.
Dr. Pannekoek writes me that he and his fellow Dutch workers have now hopes that their book (See S.S.R. December issue) will be published by a leading publishing house in London. Inter alia, he mentions that comrade Harris, of Newport, Socialist Party of Great Britain, has contacted him and offered an assurance of help by the Party in furthering the matter if negotiations with the particular publishing house fall through.
Comrades in Australia will be heartened in our fight that such a valiant fighter as Pannekoek should write:
"It was an extraordinary pleasure for me to hear from you of your work and your steady faith in our common cause. I admire your steadfastness on that lonely post. We know that conditions in Australia are difficut for revolutionary ideas and tactics: the English tradition of personal freedom, with all its illusions, and the young economy of colonial lands, with its rich possibilities of personal enterprise, work hand in hand here: 40 years ago New Zealand was praised by H.D. [.]oyd as "Newest England", with its culminating chapter entitled "And so we smashed the money ring" - the petty bourgeois illusion that by staving off the usurious finance capital they were saved from capitalism. But the fact that you mention of the many young workers being caught up by the Communist Party in their fighting desires, and thus spoilt, shows that at least there is now a younger generation of workers numerous enough to make a real proletarian fight.
"That the C.P is able - in all countries this is the case - to catch them must be ascribed chiefly, I think, to the fact that they have had nothing to awaken real enthusiasm, and do not see their future in the light of pure ideals of freedom.
"We must show them the higher ideals of self-action, self-reliance, self-mastery over the means of production, self-responsibility, as the result of their fight; then the aims the Communist Party sets before them with big noise and passionate fanaticism: organised labor under dictatorship of leaders and officials will fade and lose their attractiveness..
"I think that our propaganda formerly had too little positive content to direct and attract their thoughts.
"Socialist theory, by a primitive or mistaken interpretation of Marx's thesis of the conquest of political power, was restricted to the programe of party rule in politics and over-government; it did not see that the thesis should mean at the same time destroying of the State power and its substitution by self-rule of the working class, which as now see, must take the form of workers' councils or soviets. [Italics mine - J.A.D.] The same holds for communism. Theory and practice of the C.P. simply steps in at the place of the old 'radical' social-democracy , distinguishing itself only by its dishonesty in political intrigue for power. In their essence, the communist and the [labor] socialist parties aspire to the same aim (though in different tones): public ownership (instead of common ownership by the working class) of the means of production, dominance (dictatorial or democratic) of the State officials, and the entire class of leaders, over the workers. So it is no wonder that the workers' movement all over the world shows a decline, and wants a new orientation along true class lines, to come up to real power.
"But I consider it as an unavoidable intermezzo, a time of transition, to arrive at new clear opinions and aims, and so to come to a new class fight, after overcoming the old socialist illusions of party role.

"I will not live to see the new real fight fro freedom (I am nearly 74), but I foresee it with confidence. And I see all the strains in the world that inevitably must result in this development. Old capitalism dos not come back, State capitalism will not be able to fix itself as a stable condition; we have entered the transitory statebetween capitalism and free communism."

Further on, Dr. Pannekoek stresses that "the book on Workers' Councils will appear under a pseudonym, for several reasons, a.o., that the ideas therein contained are not personally formed by me, but grown out of the discussions of the entire group."

He will be sending me matter for the S.S.R, viz.: "a number of theses shortly summarising the viewpoints of our group of T.C. (not officially adopted in a session, but written down by myself), strongly influenced by what we experienced after the war."