

Labor combined with **SOCIALIST FIGHT** **MILITANT**

FOR WORKERS' POWER AND SOCIALISM

Volume 4, Number 6, August 1984



Hayden/Hawke
bloc exposed

Right hijacks the Party

Challenge to ranks

British miners take on Thatcher

Response of the
British Labour Party

How the NCC works

Focus on the AMFSU

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Conference reports



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Labor MILITANT

Labor Militant is a national, monthly, internal Party journal which promotes socialist policies for the Labor Party. Each issue carries news and analysis from a socialist viewpoint of events and issues of particular interest to Party members.

We have devoted a lot of space over the past few years to discussing the Prices and Incomes Policy. In our view the Accord signed with the ACTU in February 1983 is no different to the social contract that proved so disastrous for British workers under Labour Governments in the 1970s. The experience of the Accord to date has resulted in cuts to wages and living standards and it will not give workers a share of the limited economic recovery now evident.

Labor Militant looks at the nature of the capitalist economic crisis and the socialist measures needed to confront a crisis of this depth. The crisis is not caused by wages rises, nor will wages cuts help resolve the crisis in favour of the working class.

We also devote a lot of attention to the threat of war and the wars already going on. From Central America to the Middle East, the United States and its allies are determined to block progressive movements in order to protect their economic interests. Reagan's drive to war increases the danger of nuclear war and Australia's participation as part of the U.S. war machine must cease. We must remove the U.S. bases and withdraw from the aggressive ANZUS military pact.

Labor Militant campaigns for progressive policies for liberation struggles world wide — in El Salvador, for Solidarity's struggle for socialist democracy in Poland, for the rights of the Palestinian people and against Israeli aggression in the Middle East, for the anti-Marcos movement in the Philippines and against the Indonesian occupation of East Timor, and for the need to make reparations to Vietnam.

Labor is in government in four states and federally. Yet never before has there been a bigger gap between stated Labor policy and government performance, let alone the gap between performance and working class interests. This gap is reflected in important debate and discussion within Party branches and at Conference. We believe that the most free and open debate within the Party and affiliated unions on policy and practice is necessary to develop positions and actions that can represent the working class from whom Labor draws its strength.

But current structures of the Party and new undemocratic rules and practices prevent this. So we support moves to democratise these structures — in particular, to make the Parliamentarians and Party officers truly accountable to the ranks, unions and Branches.

Recently Labor Militant amalgamated with another left Party journal, Socialist Fight. This has strengthened our national coverage and distribution. We have now opened up the pages of the combined journal to a wider debate and we have invited contributions from those in the Left who have viewpoints which differ to those expressed in Labor Militant. We also encourage debate through letters and reviews.

If you agree with our aims we encourage you to help finance and distribute Labor Militant. You can get each issue sent by mail at a cost of \$6 for 10 issues. We can also make arrangements to have a bundle of any size mailed or delivered for your Branch or for you to sell. There are high costs involved in the production of a publication like Labor Militant so any financial contribution will help to ensure its continued regular appearance.

For subscriptions or any further information please fill in the clip-off below or write to any of the addresses on the following page.

'Words are like bullets'

So said Bill Hayden during the foreign policy debate at National Conference. Labor Militant agrees with that and wants to use its words to shoot down the lies and distortions of Hayden and the others who want to turn the Party into a

cheersquad for their right-wing Government.

If you want some cheap ammunition delivered to your house every month so you, too, can join the war against hurburg and hypocrisy subscribe to Labor Militant.

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Signed articles do not necessarily represent editorial opinion

Printed and published by P. Brewer PO Box 372, Broadway NSW 2007

For further information

Victoria
PO Box 319
South Carlton
Vic 3053
Western Australia
GPO Box U1925
Perth
WA 6001
Newcastle
PO Box 156
Newcastle
NSW 2300
Wollongong
PO Box 2058
Wollongong
NSW 2505
Queensland
PO Box 88
West End
Qld 4104
South Australia
PO Box 152
Unley
SA 5061
Sydney
PO Box 372
Broadway
NSW 2007

letters to L.M.

Left gains in Vic elections

Victoria's June State Conference was clearly divided by the bitterly fought union reaffiliation issue. So we saw the watershed two-to-one vote to keep out the unions with NCC Industrial Action Fund links.

But the polarisation occurred on yet another level. It was reflected in the vote for the policy committees. Where the Socialist Left would normally expect to get 9 out of 20 places, we gained approximately 10 to 11 places. Wide-ranging implications flow from this. The Left could have a major influence on Party policies, and put forward policies which are in the interest of a vast majority of Australians.

For example, in transport we can argue for a massive expansion of services instead of job cuts, for the taking over of the private bus lines (whose profits are paid directly by the Government), and against the wasteful, environmentally destructive building of freeways.

In health, we can take on the shonky trade-off of closing inner-city hospitals in exchange for opening half-size ones in the suburbs. And we can give vital support to industrial action by nurses struggling against intolerable workloads.

In my own committee, Aboriginal Affairs, we can give wholehearted backing to the demands of a Land Rights and Compensation Act that really allows self-determination — unlike the present Victorian Government proposal. And we can put a stop to the proposed Aboriginal Authority which has aroused widespread opposition.

Of course, policy committees do not have the final say — that is up to State Conference and the Administrative Committee between Conferences. But if we take a clear, firm stand in defence of working-class interests, the Right will face an uphill battle to overturn policy committee recommendations.

Some people in the Party (respectively Labor Unit 1) will say that the Left, now, is has

the numbers, must be "responsible" — i.e. it must take account of the financial and "public opinion" restrictions on the Government. If we go too fast, they say, we will lose the next election.

It is true that we must be responsible. But responsible to the needs of working people, not big business. The Party will lose electoral support if workers, the unemployed, Blacks and other downtrodden groups see the Government attacking their living standards, conditions and organisation.

Richard Lane
Member Aboriginal Affairs
Policy Committee
Vic ALP Branch

Uranium

The following letter was circulated to ALP Branches around the country.

Dear Branch Members,

The Bonang/Bendoc Branch believes that worldwide nuclear proliferation is by far the greatest danger facing the world NOW. The situation is an emergency, and requires emergency measures. Many people around the world are looking to Australia to lead the way towards nuclear disarmament and peace. At this time we have a Federal Labor Government with strong electoral support, and four Labor States — an unprecedented occurrence. We believe that these Governments should unite with a strong, clear policy on uranium mining, and the military bases used in the Nuclear Cold-War. An emergency situation requires a clear policy which can be simply put, and simply realised if the A.L.P. Governments unite in strength behind it.

That uranium mining in Australia be halted immediately until the following conditions are met worldwide:

(a) All nuclear weapons cease to exist.

(b) The handling of nuclear material for so-called peaceful purposes be made

safe by verification for the whole radioactive by-products.

2. That all military installations, and ALL military vessels and aircraft, that are involved in waging Nuclear Cold-War be removed from, or denied access to, Australian soil and waters. Installations such as Pine Gap and Nurrungar could, with the agreement of the U.S. Government, be turned over to the United Nations for the purposes of surveillance and communication about the nuclear proliferation emergency. Otherwise they should be dismantled.

3. That a National Emergency Plan be drawn up, with the full participation and knowledge of all Australian citizens and residents, to prepare for:

(a) The continuing nuclear proliferation emergency,
(b) A nuclear "incident"
(c) Wholesale nuclear destruction.

4. That Australia urge the United Nations to draw up an International Emergency plan, to prepare for the above contingencies, and resolve ways to avoid them. All U.N. member states, and non-member states, should participate.

5. That Australia urge other countries that play host to foreign military installations and weaponry involved in waging Nuclear Cold-War to

remove or deny access to those installations or weaponry.

6. That Australia urge other uranium producing countries to withdraw supply of uranium to the world market, and phase out their own nuclear reactors.

7. That Australian funds be used to encourage research and development of solar and other renewable energy systems.

It is up to us, the ordinary citizens of Australia and planet Earth, to demand of our Governments a response to this emergency with strength and purpose. Our present Federal Government has more chance of success in turning the tide of nuclear proliferation than it presently realises. It is now the immediate task of individual A.L.P. members to make that Government aware of its responsibilities. The Bendoc/Bonang Branch has resolved to send this draft policy to the Gippsland F.E.A. Annual General Meeting, and to all A.L.P. Branches in Australia.

Where do we go from here? Please discuss this issue with your Branch at the first opportunity and send comments to me at the address below.

Bob Mellroy
President, Bonang/Bendoc Branch
via Bonang 3888

Press Release:

A.C.T. Branch protests

The Branch Council of the Australian Capital Territory Branch of the Party released a press statement shortly before the National Conference reporting that the following resolution had been passed by a majority of 31 to 10:

"The A.C.T. Branch of the A.L.P. deplores the intervention, yet again, by the National Executive into its internal affairs.

The Branch particularly regrets that none of the individuals involved should

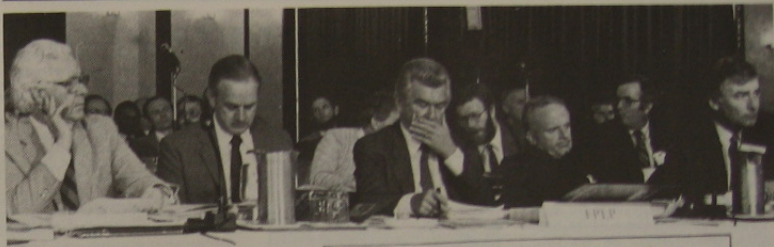
themselves of the appeal mechanisms in place in the A.C.T. Branch even though informed in writing by the President of the means of appeal.

"It is of concern that the National Executive supports the vote of a member who joined the Branch in breach of rule 5 & d (ii) which requires appropriate union membership.

"The Branch authorises an appeal to National Conference."

Letters to L.M. should be sent to Labor Militant PO Box 372 Broadway, NSW 2067. Please keep them reasonably short so we can print as many as possible.

National Conference



Australian Labor Party



Policy brought into line with practice Right wing hijacks the Party

There has probably been no other Conference like it in the history of the Australian Labor Party. Sixteen months after winning office, leaders of the Federal Government — Hawke, Hayden, and Keating — approached the 36th biennial National Conference with a single-minded determination to win endorsement for a thoroughgoing pro-capitalist strategy that openly sets out to purge the platform of virtually everything that contradicts the practice of their right-wing government. And they succeeded.

editorial

In the process they stripped the Conference of its importance as a policy-making body of the Party and turned it into an elaborate promotional media event for themselves. Hawke took the backs of his loyal ministers and of the State Labor premiers. He also took advantage of his popularity with the big business press to warn delegates that they had no option but to accept his dictates.

The Government's major policy achievements were to win endorsement of Keating's "free market" economic platform, to bring foreign policy into line with right-wing domestic policy, and to finally destroy the Party's highly popular anti-uranium policy.

These "achievements" enabled the capitalist press to herald the Conference as a triumph for Hawke's "pragmatism" and a personal victory for star performers like Hayden and Keating. But they angered many Party members who watched in disbelief and they shattered the hopes of many others who have looked to Labor to provide an alternative to the harsh policies of the Fraser years.

Conference has clearly thrown down a challenge — Is the Party to become a simple pool of labour for electioneering and a rubber stamp for pro-business Labor governments, or will the rank and file be able to reassert their rights and interests?

The Party rank and file had little opportunity to participate in the Conference itself or to influence its outcome. The 90 full delegates included 20 Federal parliamentarians, 23 State parliamentarians, 20 full-time union officials and six State ALP secretaries. Five listed their occupation as practicing lawyers, three as assistants to parliamentarians, one as a farmer and none as blue-collar workers.

Government ministers presented the policy reports and were in a position to accept or reject proposed amendments. Only once, on an environmental issue, was a minister embarrassed by a vote that had not been successfully lined up.

Within the Conference hall there were perhaps 100 seats for business observers, 80 for diplomatic observers, and four long rows of desks for journalists.

Continued on page 6.

National Conference

Continued from page 5.

More than 150 journalists registered on the first day. As the Financial Review noted, the media had the numbers at the Conference.

There were just 50 seats each for registered Party observers and the "public." Registered Party observers had to have their applications in over a month before the Conference and most of them were ALP staff members.

It was more a publicity extravaganza than a Party Conference. Hawke's regular speeches were directed at the television cameras rather than the delegates. His keynote address, on the second day of Conference, was punctuated with dramatic and carefully rehearsed gestures. They all got good press — Hawke, Keating, Hayden etc. On the other hand, the Left delegates were portrayed as isolated, doctrinaire and lacking Hawke's supposed "rapport" with the community.

The media that plays such a big part in creating public opinion praised Hawke for using that as his starting point. What was not emphasised, however, is that Hawke is also playing a big role in moulding public opinion to accept unpopular measures like uranium mining and a "restructuring" of industry that will destroy thousands of jobs.

In the weeks leading up to the Conference press commentators presented as scandalous the notion that Hawke could conceivably be defeated on the floor of Conference on an important issue like uranium mining, East Timor or U.S. bases. When it was demonstrated in practice that the Right had a solid majority, Hawke was given credit for engineering a "triumph" to his Government.

The majority for the Right was around 58 to 41 when Centre Left votes were added to those of the "hard" Right. Hawke won out of his way at this Conference to show that his action forms a solid alliance with the Right on all major policy issues, despite earlier promises to play an independent role.

Centre Left leaders, in fact, led the Right on issues such as uranium mining and foreign policy. They enthusiastically endorsed the Government's economic policies and they joined chorus in sharp attacks on the Left.

Only on the question of uranium mining — when Victorian Premier John Cain and Attorney-General James Kennan thought it wise to vote with the Left — did their discipline crack on an important issue. And only once did they vote as a faction for a policy not acceptable to the rest of the Right when Western Australian delegates felt obliged to submit a watered-down version of State Branch policy against the visits of U.S. warships. Their amendment simply called for a reduction in the frequency of such visits.

It is interesting to contrast the 1982 Conference with this one. In 1982 Hawke and Hayden combined to make the Prices and Incomes Accord the "centre-piece" of Party policy. They were preparing to govern in the interests of the bosses at a time of deepening recession. The Accord was needed to shore up profits at the expense of real wages and to prevent unions resisting job-cutting rationalisations.

The 1984 Conference came at the height of a partial and limited economic recovery. The Accord was enshrined as a proven way of keeping the unions in check so that profits could be consolidated and used to carry out further rationalisations.

This time the whole economic platform was made consistent with the principles of the Accord and purged of commitments contradicting the Government's approach. And a greater effort was made to bring foreign policy into line — to remove all obstacles for openly defending the interests of Australian capitalists abroad, particularly in Asia.

Now they are government ministers the Labor Leaders have the need and the opportunity to refine their policies. It becomes even more embarrassing to have policies that are not consistent with a pro-capitalist approach and they have the full resources of the public service and their own staff to prepare their cases.

To pursue its aim of governing in the interests of the bosses, the Labor Government needs independence from the labour movement. To this end Hawke has centralised power in the hands of his senior ministers. He has created a kitchen cabinet and enforced the rules of Cabinet solidarity to present a united face of the ministers in the broader parliamentary caucus.

Hawke and his supporters are also centring power in the Party in the hands of the National Executive. Already the executive intervenes more regularly in the affairs of the State Branches, as it did recently to impose an order on the Senate ticket for Queensland, and again to change the ACT Branch delegation to Conference.

The Conference went on to endorse a decision to intervene further in the ACT Branch, and intervention in Victoria over the re-affiliation application of four NCC-dominated unions has only been delayed.

Conference also voted for a review to establish uniform national rules for the Party which will leave the National Executive with even greater authority.

By these methods, the Government leaders are making the Party an appendage of the Government.

In such a Party there is little room for dissenters. Left delegates were frequently attacked during Conference for breaking with "consensus" (ie dictatorial rule of those who have the numbers). And at a press conference after the Conference Hawke issued a thinly-veiled warning to them by saying they need to "have a good look at themselves" because their views are "less than ideally suited to conditions of the Party, the Government and the country."

But despite Hawke's threats, the performance of the Left was lacklustre, with very few exceptions. At Conference most of the Left delegates went out of their way to stress their loyalty and praise the "achievements" of the Hawke Government.

Time and again they stressed that their proposals were moderate, and indeed they mostly were — half-hearted, in fact. For example, they argued that the conscience vote on abortion should only be removed for parliamentarians elected after July 13, 1984. This approach enabled the Right to attack them for hypocrisy and inconsistency.

Leaders of the Victorian Socialist Left were the most consistent and put forward convincing arguments on particular issues, but they too endorsed the Government's general strategy.

While strong stands were taken on foreign policy, no delegate presented a viable progressive economic policy.

No attempt was made to present a credible alternative strategy linking anti-capitalist policies at home and abroad. As failed to create a real pole of attraction for angry Party members and other political activists.

The results of the Conference have certainly created anger in the ranks of the Party and among those who have looked to Labor to implement meaningful reforms. However, those who become disenfranchised with the Labor leaders can react in contradictory ways.

Some may drift out of political activity, or, even worse, shift their allegiance to the Liberals or Australian Democrats (as the in NSW indicated). Others may redouble their efforts to change Government policies either through the Party or from without.

The experience of the past — including the anti-conscription of the '60s and early '70s and the anti-Vietnam War movement — shows that mass mobilisations in-teract closely with the politics of the Party.

By linking the struggles of the anti-war and environmental forces with those of unionists who take action to defend living standards, a political force can be created with the power to change the course of the Government and take the Party out of the hands of those who actively promote the interests of big business.

This is the challenge that faces the Left and the only course that will halt its further demise as a progressive political force.

The economy — Was there a debate?

High unemployment, falling living standards, an international recession and the National Conference of the ALP — all these elements would lead one to presume that the key issues and the central debate would be around the economy, and economic and industrial strategy. But for anyone who attended the Conference at the Lakeside there was no substantive debate on these matters.

Pat Brewer

Member Forest Lodge (NSW) Branch and Amalgamated Metals, Foundry and Shipwrights Union delegate to NSW State Conference

Instead the right wing dominated the discussion. They had the facts, the figures, the arguments. They had lined up the minor deals behind the scenes before their Centre Unity and Centre Left sub-groups — those more tentative phrases of "partial limits," "monitoring," and "ongoing investigations," which the "wetter" elements of the Right used to save their consciences in order to carry out what they really believe.

The performance of the Left was lamentable. Moral exhortation and platitudes provided the thrust of the "debate." They bewailed the lack of written commitment to redistributive measures while ignoring the factual record of the Hawke Government in office.

They bewailed the plight of the two million poor without advancing policy alternatives to tackle the growing numbers forced to live in poverty. It was more akin to a revival meeting performance than a political debate and was only matched throughout the Conference during the uranium debate, when the Left had the facts and the Right had the moral indignation (and the numbers).

The big-business media editorials summed it up pretty accurately. The Financial Review phrased it as "clear evidence of the intellectual bankruptcy of the Labor Left." The paper continued:

"Far from being a forum for controversy over current issues of economic policy, the pros and cons of expansion, budget deficits, wage restraint and prices and incomes policy... the debate throughout was dominated by the very tired rhetoric of old Labor fears of the international money power."

This came to a head in the one major debate on foreign bank entry. The Left sought a delay of two years whilst



Paul Keating

bemoaning the evils of the multinationals.

The Right had a field day pointing out the ludicrous dilemma for the socialists of the Left posed by their support for a continued virtual monopoly by the four major Australian banks, with their control of 81 per cent of banking finance. Jack Ferguson summarised the Left's national chauvinism in a fairly stark way: "If we have to choose, I would choose our Australian banks not international capital!"

But as Keating had so accurately pointed out, patriotic fervour was irrelevant. International capital in the form of the merchant banks and finance capital was already well-established in Australia.

To ignore this is to deny the reality of capitalism as an international system, and to ignore Australian capital's success in the international market and its role as a minor imperialist power. But it is just this reality that the Left has rejected.

It ignored the real class relationship of forces when it accepted the Prices and Incomes Accord, with its logic of class collaboration and commitment to the maintenance of the capitalist system in Australia.

Commitment and support for the Accord has gagged the Left and given the Right open slather. Left figures like Victorian SLer Andrew Theophanous are reduced to pleading for amendments on the basis that "We haven't put in any clauses that require nationalisation or anything extreme."

In fact, the economic debate and the policy adopted at Conference just

elaborated the terms of the Accord and incorporated all of its policy implications into the Party platform. The Left was reduced to protesting the nakedness of these policies stripped of any thin covering of left-sounding rhetoric.

The harshest factual point made about the economy was spelt out by John Murphy, a member of the Old Guard faction and the Liquor Trades and a Queensland delegate, during the Sport and Recreation debate. He pointed out that the Government's record in job creation was not all that it seemed. He stated that of the job creation programs in tourism, 30,000 jobs were of a casual nature involving something like 2 hours work per week.

By the time the industrial relations policy debate came up at the end of the week some concessions had been made to the union movement by the Right. Amendments on protection for the metal, heavy engineering and shipbuilding industries were unanimously accepted.

The Accord and its realities were detailed into the platform. Commitment to full quarterly wage indexation was brought into line with the reality of six monthly adjustments. References to "collective bargaining" for wages and conditions were replaced by notions of "negotiations" and "consultation."

One amendment hailed as a victory for the Left was the acceptance of an amendment which enshrined industrial democracy into the platform. This form of "democracy" involves the rights of union officials to sit in on decision-making committees relating to management plans and reorganisation in certain industries.

But such consultative rights certainly don't equate with decision-making rights. Workers' representatives on such councils find themselves bound into management needs and party to the anti-worker decisions management is forced to take to defend and increase profits. That's a distorted notion of democracy.

Perhaps the best indication of the content of the new economic and industrial platform of the Party is the attitude of the business observers at the Conference. They were quite open in their praise of the Hawke Government.

They saw the platform as more flexible and open to interpretation and as having stolen the ground from under the Liberals. As one observer remarked in relation to Keating: "Listening to him up there, if you shut your eyes you'd think he was a Liberal."

And the Left has no alternative to this until they break with the Accord.

National Conference

Labor Left anti-uranium statement

'The struggle will not cease'

At the conclusion of the Conference debate on uranium mining some of the leaders of the Left went outside to address the anti-uranium protesters. On their behalf, Senator Bruce Childs read out a prepared statement which was later given to the press. It read as follows:

"We hereby state our intention of pursuing our long-term aim of closing down the uranium industry in Australia.

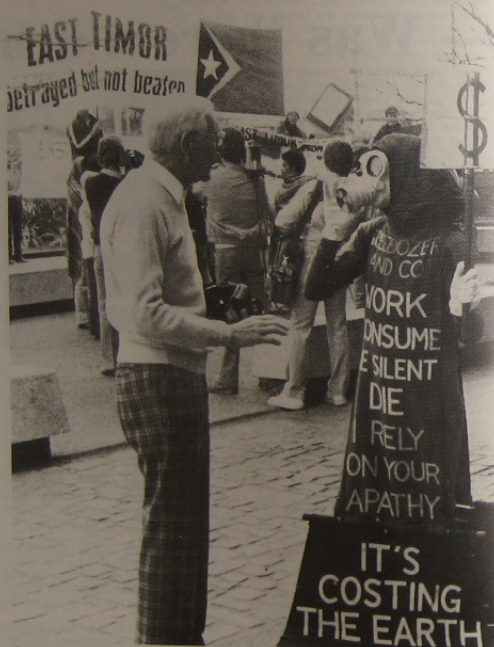
"The policy as it now stands does not support the rank-and-file ALP position throughout Australia. A report from the uranium sub-committee of the ALP Secretariat concluded that an overwhelming number of submissions from Branches were against the mining and export of uranium, which the final draft proposal of the committee should reflect. But they chose to ignore this rank-and-file position.

"Further, the new policy defies the views reflected time and again in ALP Conferences throughout Australia. All State Branches and the majority of local Branches have strong policies opposed to the mining and export of uranium except in NSW where the State Conference adopted a softer line on uranium in defiance of strong anti-uranium resolutions from local Branches.

"Friends, the fear, resentment and frustration that this policy will unleash throughout the ALP and supporters' ranks will be a high price to pay for placating the mining companies and the proponents of the world nuclear cycle.

"The question of safe waste disposal methods has still not been adequately answered by the supporters of nuclear energy. The Three Mile Island accident was a warning which was largely ignored. Accidents, both publicised and unpublicised, happen frequently putting to risk hundreds of thousands of people.

"We refuse to accept responsibility for a policy that does not adequately address these problems. The decision further discredits the Right and Centre groups in the ALP in the eyes of the peace and nuclear disarmament move-



Demonstrators outside Conference venue.

ments in Australia. And there is a widespread view that the withholding of Australian uranium from the world nuclear cycle is one of the major contributions Australia can make towards reducing the risk of nuclear war.

"Those delegates have shown little public conscience on this issue. We wonder how they will feel when, in time, the full ramifications of the decisions they took today will be felt.

"We are proud to belong to the group in the ALP that has not bowed to the enormous, unrelenting pressure that has been brought to bear on us to change our position. We call on all peace and disarmament groups to double their efforts, along with us, to exercise their rights and help overturn the policy at the next Conference.

Branches' views ignored Full steam ahead on uranium mining

Anti-uranium protesters began pouring into Canberra on the weekend before National Conference opened on July 9. When the delegates arrived for the opening session they were greeted with a myriad of banners, figures clad in black, and a huge effigy of Hawke. Anti-uranium songs were sung in the manner of non-stop Gregorian chants.

Martin Tuck

Member Livingstone (NSW) Branch

On the day of the uranium debate, Tuesday July 10, over 1000 protesters crowded into the lobbies of the hotel. They surrounded the doors of the Conference hall and crowded onto the staircase leading up to it.

In unison they sang: "Which side are you on? Are you on the side of suicide? Are you on the side of genocide? Which side are you on?" as the delegates picked a path through the human mass. Someone from Women for Survival read out a telegram of support from the women of the Greenham Common peace camp in England.

The tiny public gallery inside the hall was packed with protesters who held up placards and cheered or jeered the speakers. The debate could also be heard by those outside and their roars helped create the atmosphere of a bullfight.

Minister for Minerals and Energy Senator Peter Walsh opened the debate with an aggressive speech in favour of the draft policy submitted by the mining committee.

This recommended indefinite mining at the Ranger and Nabarlek mines in Northern Territory and approval for the development of the huge Roxby Downs mine in South Australia. It proposed to open the way for the signing of new export contracts.

Walsh's main arguments were that uranium mining is no more dangerous than coal mining; that Labor had never had a blanket ban on uranium mining; and that there is no evidence to suggest that uranium exported for use in nuclear power plants could end up being used for the production of nuclear weapons.

These arguments were further elaborated by Hawke's chief numbers man, Senator Graham Richardson, who ignored all the evidence of the recent decline in the nuclear power industry to suggest that by 1990 20 per cent of OECD countries will depend on nuclear power to some degree for the generation of

electricity.

"What right have we," he implored, "to deprive deprive people of light and power?"

Victorian delegate Joan Coxedge led the opposition by moving an amendment which sought a ban on all new mines and contracts, and the repudiation of contracts for exporting uranium to any countries already involved in the production of nuclear weapons.

Although her amendment was a compromise to the extent that it would allow, for example, the export of uranium to Japan until the expiry of existing contracts in 1996, Coxedge put forward a strong case for closing down the industry.

She pointed out that there is no known safe method for disposing of nuclear wastes. And she debunked the arguments that nuclear power currently contributes just 1 per cent of world energy needs and this proportion is shrinking.

She said the argument that Australia must continue exporting uranium in order to have an influence in strengthening the safeguards in the nuclear non-proliferation treaty is like arguing that "one needs to become a criminal in order to control crime." She suggested anti-uranium sentiment had grown stronger in the Party ranks since the sell-out of anti-uranium policy at the 1982 National Conference, and that the majority was obviously in favour of a strong anti-uranium policy.

Coxedge was well supported by NSW delegate Frank Walker who reminded delegates that the massive disarmament rally in Sydney on April 15 had boomed when a message from Bill Hayden had been read out. There could be no guarantee, he stressed, that the ranks of

disarmament would stick with the Party if it continues to betray their interests. They might turn to the Australian Democrats or even form a new party like the Greens Party in West Germany.

Peter Duncan from South Australia moved a motion similar to that of Coxedge, except that it proposed to exempt 'Roxby Downs from all bans. This gave Bill Hayden an opportunity to attack the Left by hypocrisy.

Roxby Downs, he pointed out, has a deposit of 1.3 million tonnes compared to 400,000 tonnes in all other Australian deposits combined. If the Left maintained a consistent argument on the dangers of nuclear power and the



Joan Coxedge

proliferation of nuclear weapons, he suggested, it would present "formidable arguments." But in demonstrating a willingness to bargain with principles it undermined its case.

Duncan's amendment was defeated overwhelmingly on the votes. But Coxedge's amendment went down by the relatively narrow margin of 55 to 44.

Victorian Premier John Cain and Attorney-General James Kennan and the Queensland "Old Guard" faction broke ranks with the Right to vote for it. But the Left lost the votes of officials of the Miscellaneous Workers Union in the Tasmanian and South Australian delegations.

The pro-uranium platform was adopted.

Protesters outside the hall were angered by the result and a couple of the delegates, including Hayden, were jostled as they left. It is a wonder they weren't thrown down the stairs.

Misrepresented

Doublespeak

During Conference Hawke defended the presence of the U.S. war bases in Australia, praised the aggressive ANZUS military pact, defended military aid to Indonesia and "won" a policy in favour of exporting Australian uranium. Yet during his keynote address he said:

"This profound concern about disarmament and peace is something which unites all members of the Labor Party as well as very broad sections of the Australian community. We have demonstrated a commitment and priority to arms control, disarmament and peace unmatched by any previous Government."

Seems reasonable

Just before the vote was taken at the National Conference on new Standing Orders, Bill Hartley asked whether they would come into effect immediately or after the end of the Conference as is the case with platform changes. When Neville Wran said he intended using the new procedure for this Conference, Hartley again rose to his feet to say: "Mr Chairman, may I then speak in support of the resolution on the clear understanding that after the foreign affairs debate on Wednesday, when we repudiate the American alliance, it will come into effect on Wednesday evening."

Counting the numbers

During the Conference debate on East Timor, Bill Hayden took exception to claims by the Left that it is impossible to know what is really happening in East Timor by saying "We now have a journalist in Jakarta." An interjector yelled out: "Yes, and five dead ones in East Timor."

National Conference

Ramos Horta comments: 'Horse-trading' on East Timor



Timorese protest at Conference

Jose Ramos Horta is the official representative of Fretilin at the United Nations. He was in Australia for about a month leading up to the Conference and attended the Conference, where he took part in some of the last-minute negotiations on the policy motion on East Timor.

At the conclusion of the debate he expressed anger at the hypocrisy of those who suggested that Australia must recognise the annexation of East Timor as an accomplished fact. Australia, he pointed out, directly assisted that annexation by providing military aid to Indonesia and by providing diplomatic cover for the whole exercise.

He felt the whole foreign policy debate evaded the central question of Australia's aggressive role in the region. Before the debate began he made the following comments to Labor Militant:

"It is disappointing that an issue which is of principle and which involves a universally recognised right — the right to self-determination for all colonised people — has become such a difficult point for the ALP National Conference. It is as if the issue of self-determination for East Timorese people is something new and yet it has been on the agenda of the United Nations since 1961.

"It is simply outrageous that within the ALP National Conference one still has to debate and lobby hard for our right that has been established by the UN. The issue of self-determination is

older than the Labor Party itself so it is absurd to have to come to Canberra to debate it again.

"What I have been watching here has not been a debate over principles and rights but more like horse-trading or a cattle auction.

"To a large extent what happens here is irrelevant anyway because the Australian Labor Government has found ways and means to evade implementing the old policy.

"The motion to be put forward by Barry Jones (see article page 11) is certainly better than what Hayden was entertaining a few weeks ago. So there has been some success for the East Timor lobby in Australia and the Left.

"A few weeks ago, in fact a few days ago, Bill Hayden was talking about following Malcolm Fraser's policies entirely. So the result is an improvement on that.

"The participation of Timorese people in the protests outside this Conference was quite important. It shows that they are concerned about their brothers and sisters and relatives back home. There are about 10,000 East Timorese in Australia and we can constitute an important voice.

"In some States we can be a political force. In Darwin, for example, we are the second largest ethnic community.

"We are planning a big national conference of East Timorese people in Australia on Anzac Day next year with foreign guests coming from the United States and Europe, including Portugal."

Foreign policy Hayden's charge to the right

Bill Hayden's performance in the foreign policy debate at Conference attracted a lot of attention. It was highly provocative and had the dual aim of pushing the Party platform to the right while attempting to ridicule and isolate the Left, in particular the Victorian Socialist Left.

Martin Tuck
Member Livingstone (NSW) Branch

He began the debate by saying that he hoped time would not be wasted in "irrelevant" argument. He suggested it was presumptuous of delegates to submit motions on developments in all parts of the world when they could not possibly know as much as he did. It would be far better, he suggested, if the Party just left matters in his hands.

When the Left raised its opposition to the ANZUS military alliance and to U.S. bases he claimed they were using third order arguments that had no validity.

"For Christ's sake, I've been to Pine Gap and Nurrungar," he exclaimed at one point. But he was not prepared to report what he had seen and told delegates they would have to be content with the information (or lack of it) contained in Hawke's June 6 statement to Parliament on the function of the bases. He was prepared to resort to bald-faced lies and distortions. He agreed with the extreme right-wing views of Bill Morrison on East Timor and Bob Carr on Central America.

He accused Fretilin of breaking last year's ceasefire in East Timor with an unprovoked and cold-blooded attack on Indonesian troops. But he presented no evidence to support the unlikely proposition that Fretilin would choose to bring down the wrath of the Indonesians on their heads. And he completely ignored the mountain of evidence on the genocidal war of attrition the Indonesians have inflicted on the country for over eight years.

He agreed with Carr's assertion that the Sandinista Government in Nicaragua has been guilty of gross violations of human rights and that the Left is being hypocritical in defending it. But again he presented no evidence to back his claims. And he ignored the enormous social gains that have been made in Nicaragua despite the best efforts of the Reagan administration to re-impose a pro-imperialist dictatorship.

Rather than drawing attention to the fact that Nicaragua is besieged by counter-revolutionary forces armed and trained by the U.S. CIA, he drew attention to an allegation that Nicaraguan troops had crossed the border into Costa



Hayden pushed platform hard right.

Rica and attacked Costa Rican militiamen in early May. Hayden knows that the incident he referred to was a stunt staged by a right-wing section of the Costa Rican police working closely with the Nicaraguan counter-revolutionaries operating out of that country. He also knows that the Costa Rican Government has subsequently stated publicly that it has no fight with Nicaragua. But the truth did not suit his purposes.

Hayden withdrew his own motion on East Timor which had stressed the need for better relations between Australia and Indonesia and only mentioned in passing that the Party had disapproved of the way the former Portuguese colony had been "incorporated" into Indonesia. In its place he accepted a similar motion from Victorian delegate Barry Jones which began by stating concern at the incorporation and at reports of "renewed fighting."

Hayden told delegates he was not particularly happy with the alterations to his original motion but was prepared to accept it. It dropped support for self-determination and included de facto recognition of the annexation. An amendment aimed at restoring support for self-determination lost by a vote of 43 to 55.

In moving to delete mention of ANZUS in the Party platform, Victorian delegate Joan Coxedge pointed out that it in fact involves Australia in an aggressive military strategy in Asia. She said Australia is one of only five nations in the world whose troops are trained solely for

operations in other countries. However, her motion was vigorously attacked by both Hayden and Hawke and it lost by 37-57.

Another Victorian delegate, Joe Camilleri, moved an amendment to the platform calling for the phasing out of the U.S. bases. He pointed out that they play a role in the navigation of nuclear-armed submarines and in pinpointing targets in the Soviet Union. They are, therefore, a strike capacity against the Soviet Union. The bases, he said, increase rather than decrease the risk of nuclear war and are opposed by a large and growing section of the Australian population. His amendment did better than that of Coxedge on ANZUS but lost by 43 to 55.

The Left also failed to win enough support for recognition of the Palestine Liberation Organisation, recognition of the Heng Samrin Government in Kampuchea, ending military aid to the Philippines, ending trade with South Africa and for condemning Indonesia's efforts to flood Irian Jaya with people "transmigrated" from Java.

Hayden's role in the debate angered many on the Left who had previously supported him against Hawke. As leader of the Party from 1977 to 1983 he had allowed a number of progressive foreign policy positions to stand unchallenged.

However, Hayden is now a minister in the Hawke Government. At Conference he was determined to prove himself in that capacity and to bring Party policy into line with Government practice.

National Conference

Who really 'owns' the Labor Party?

During his keynote speech to Conference Bob Hawke told delegates: "When I took out my first ticket in the ALP nearly 40 years ago — in 1947 — I did not feel I was buying a share in the Party. There was no sense of partial ownership. This reflects a truth we would all do well to ponder upon — namely that there is no proprietorship of the Party. I do not own it, you do not own it, nor together do all its members own it. . . ."

By Pat Brewer

Member Forest Lodge (NSW) Branch and Amalgamated Metals, Foundry and Shipwrights Union

"The concept of a trust is much more relevant. Our Party historically has been, and in my view remains, an instrument to advance the interests and well-being of the mass of the Australian people. If anyone has a beneficial interest in our Party it is the people, particularly those who support it with their vote, and we are the trustees for them."

On the surface this may seem like a democratic notion — all Australians have a stake in the ALP. But in fact it is the very opposite. What Hawke was telling delegates, particularly those of the Left, was that the Government will not accept their direction. He was saying that the Government has been elected by the "mass of Australian people" and is, therefore, responsible to them and not the Party.

But who determines what the "mass of Australian people" want — Bob Hawke and his cronies? The unfortunate truth is that "public opinion" frequently reflects the opinions propagated in the media outlets owned by the likes of Rupert Murdoch and the Fairfax empire. These enemies of the labour movement are in a position to manipulate public opinion with a daily dose of lies and distortions. On the other hand the organised labour movement — through the trade unions and Party structures — is in a good position to reflect the immediate concerns and interests of the mass of working people.

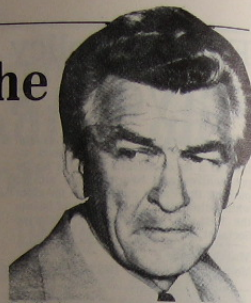
The Labor Party was formed some 90 years ago precisely because these people were denied any influence in the political sphere. If the Party put into effect a program determined by the ranks of the labour movement it would be governing in the interests of the overwhelming majority rather than in the interests of those with power and influence.

But at Conference Hawke went out of his way to stress the independence of his Government from the Party and union ranks. For example, he intervened in the foreign policy debate to make it clear that "any Government led by me" will never tolerate policies designed to weaken the alliance with the U.S.

He accused Victorian Socialist Left leaders like Bill Hartley and Joan Coxedge of spreading "violent anti-Americanism" which has "no place in the Labor Party."

In addition to confirming the independence of the Government from democratic control by the Party, Conference took steps to increase the power of the National Executive. It was decided to draft uniform national rules for all State Branches, and this will leave the executive as the final arbiter in all disputes.

Already this year the executive has intervened in the Queensland Branch over Senate pre-elections and has decided to intervene in Victoria over the affiliation



Bob Hawke

applications of four NCC-dominated unions.

Conference also endorsed a decision to intervene in the Australian Capital Territory Branch to bring its rules into line with those elsewhere. This followed a dispute over the results of the election of ACT delegates to National Conference which resulted in a Conference vote to replace the elected delegate with a supporter of Hawke.

Hawke's plan is to make the Party structure subservient to the parliamentary leadership. He sees it as an instrument of his pro-capitalist Government.

Abortion: 'Conscience vote' stays

The right of women to have free choice as to whether or not to have an abortion has been a central demand of the women's movement for about 15 years. In that time access to abortions has increased dramatically, yet laws against having abortions remain on the criminal code.

Pat Brewer

Member Forest Lodge (NSW) Branch and the Amalgamated Metals, Foundry and Shipwrights Union

A major reason for the fact that legislation lags behind community attitudes and actual practice is that the Labor Party has retained the ridiculous notion that its parliamentarians should be allowed a "conscience vote" on this question.

However, the pressure for abolition of the conscience vote has also been increasing and at the 1982 National Conference a motion to that effect lost by only 44 to 55.

At this Conference a deal was done to allow Bob Hawke and other Government

leaders to be seen voting for the insertion of a clause in favour of abortion rights in the platform on women, while they defended retention of the conscience vote.

The policy platform submitted to Conference contained the following sentence: "Labor supports the particular right of women to choice of fertility control and abortion." An amendment to delete the words "and abortion" was defeated decisively despite an impassioned speech in favour of the amendment by Deputy Prime Minister Lionel Bowen.

When it came to the debate on Party rules, Senator Pat Giles from Western Australia moved that all Labor parliamentarians elected or re-elected after July 13, 1984, be obliged to support Party policy on abortion rights, while those elected earlier should abstain.

However, this was not part of the deal and so Hawke, and other Government leaders, came out in support of the "right" of parliamentarians to put their own views on this subject above Party policy.

The Giles amendment lost by 35 to 55.

Bill Hartley 'Left can gain support'

One of the leading left delegates at Conference — Bill Hartley from Victoria — has been a delegate to 14 consecutive Conferences since 1963. He is a member of the Foreign Affairs and Defence Policy Committee and the Victorian Branch Administrative Committee. His comments on the 1984 Conference were as follows:

"The left obviously didn't do well at Conference in terms of results. I think they did well enough in terms of argument. The proposals we put were quite moderate and maybe they could be criticised for not fully addressing the issues. But I think we have come out with a number of pluses.

"The position of the so-called Centre Left, which signals left and turns right, has been very clearly defined. It has left the Left occupying the whole of the left ground and a lot of the middle ground, and the whole Party will respond by giving the Left more support at the next Conference.

"Some of the Centre Left delegates came to Conference saying they were anti-uranium and against U.S. bases and had more socialist-oriented policies on a wide range of issues. But they just didn't vote that way. They voted with the Government.

"Hayden was unnecessarily abrasive. But his role was not really a surprise because we are quite active in the Federal Foreign Affairs and Defence Policy Committee, and we knew which way things were going there. He really went in and kicked hard and that was disappointing to the extent that we have given him a lot of support in the past.

"I suppose that the result on East Timor was one of the biggest disappointments because it is normally a 'soft' issue in the sense that you can attract support from the Centre and the Right on the fundamental question of justice for the Timorese people. And yet even there we lost our majority.

"Admittedly this was one area

Another ASIO inquiry Combe 'not guilty', but no compo

Bob Hawke's "fixer" Bob Hogg was given the credit for putting together a motion exonerating David Combe for his role in the so-called Combe-Ivanov affair.

Martin Tuck

Member Livingstone (NSW) Branch

In reality Hogg had his work cut out to prevent Hawke copping a lot of criticism on the floor of over the fact that he was prepared to blacklist Combe on the basis of an unsubstantiated report from ASIO. South Australian delegates were prepared to introduce a motion calling for compensation for Combe.

As it turned out Hawke was able to give a long speech suggesting that he was pleased to welcome his "colleague and friend of many years standing" (Combe,

that is) back into the fold. He told delegates it had been "heart rendering" to do ASIO's bidding and create a public scandal over the fact that the Soviet Union, like most other countries, maintains intelligence personnel at its Australian Embassy.

The motion to exonerate Combe and offer him a job was adopted unanimously, but this did not flow through to support for a motion calling for an open, public inquiry into the "scope, purpose and functions of all known security and intelligence organisations in Australia."

The call for an inquiry was part of an amendment to the Constitutional and Legal platform moved by Victorian delegate Joan Coxedge. It also called for abolition of the political police functions of these organisations; abandonment of the term "subversion" as a legal basis for security and intelligence operations; investigation of the past activity of

where we had some influence on the negotiations, but we didn't go far enough and we went down.

"Although it is not spelt out explicitly, Australia has now recognised the incorporation of East Timor into Indonesia and that is a most unfortunate thing.

"But as I said before the Left now has the opportunity to augment its support and we must keep on developing issues. We are obligated as a matter of policy to accept Conference decisions, but we will certainly be working for better positions at the next Conference. And as the Centre Left has blown its cover it could well be interesting.

"In regard to the situation in Victoria where the attempt to bring back the four NCC-dominated unions, we decided not to have the debate at Conference because we had assurances about the way the question will be dealt with. And it will not be an immediate and urgent problem for the labour movement."



David Combe

the organisations, periodic reviews presented to Parliament on their work; and the establishment of an Appeals Tribunal to hear and determine action in case of complaints from people affected by security operations.

Coxedge presented a convincing case for the abolition of the existing security agencies by recounting their role in the frame-up of Combe; the frame-up of three Ananda Marga members on their alleged involvement in the Hilton bombing; the practice raid on Melbourne's Sheraton Hotel; and the link between ASIO and the infamous Nugan-Hand Bank.

However, her amendment lost by a vote of 43 to 55. Instead Conference adopted a platform which restricted itself to deleting "subversion" as a basis for security operations and the appointment of a single "ombudsman" figure to hear complaints.

Britain

Labour: growing support for the miners

Since the miners' strike began in early April, there has been growing activity in the Labour Party to support the miners. As the strike spread and the miners declared that they were prepared to stick it out till Christmas, or as long as necessary to win, it became clear that material aid would be vital, food and money especially. As police action against the strike has mounted, mass pickets have been organised.

Janet Burstall

Member Rozelle East (ALP) Branch and Municipal Employees Union

The response from the Labour Party has ranged from wholehearted support in these tasks, to attempts to ignore the strike. Labour Party Branches have been instrumental in establishing many local support committees which have raised thousands of pounds, and collected food for the miners. In areas where there are no mines, some support committees have adopted a pit. Examples of Labour Party Branches which include 10 coaches visiting Kent miners from East London, and Women's sections in the Labour Party have been especially involved, no doubt inspired by the activity of the mining community women.

In mid-May, the National Conference of Labour Women overwhelmingly supported the miners. Miners' wives were honored guests at every session, impressing on delegates the need for support from the whole labour movement to win their struggle. Emergency resolutions were carried. These demanded that the Labour leadership give unconditional support to the miners' struggle and implement the 50p levy. They also demanded that Labour Councils waive rents, offer free meals, and take up the question of police tactics, where council-employed police are being used against the miners.

Labour Party Branches have also been combatting police violence. For example, leaders of some Nottinghamshire Branches established a Co-ordinating Committee Against the Police Presence, which resulted in a large demonstration demanding "police out of the coalfields."

About a month into the strike, the National Executive Committee of the Labour Party voted unanimously to ask every member of the Party to give 50p (about 75 cents) a week to the Branches, and has provided an incentive to fund raising, despite lack of enthusiasm from the N.E.C.

The response of Kinnoch, the leader of the Labour Party, can at best be described as two-timing. At one stage he declared that "when people become violent in the process of picketing, I condemn it."

His indication of support for the miners' demand for no pit closures thus has a rather hollow ring. Two miners have died massive, with the appearance of paramilitary-style operations, no doubt tried and tested in Northern Ireland. The miners cannot win without picketing.

About four months into the strike, Kinnoch felt obliged to



Miners at Cotgrave Colliery in Nottingham.

speak on a platform supporting the miners. Opinion polls showed that the strike was losing Thatcher support, and increasing Labour's. Kinnoch was also risking loss of support within the Labour Party and unions by keeping quiet.

Left MPs in the Campaign Group have been particularly vocal in supporting the miners (see accompanying statement). Tony Benn belongs to the Campaign Group. Their candidate in the Group had swallowed the line that it was necessary to unite behind Kinnoch in order to win the next elections, and give up the fight against the Right in the Party.

Even now, Kinnoch's half-heartedness in supporting the miners must begin to pressure the Campaign MPs to take a harder stand within the Labour Party against Kinnoch and his so-called "soft Left" (which plays a similar role to the Australian Centre-Left).

Given the level of active support in the Labour Party for the miners, many rank-and-file members will no doubt wish to pursue further the role of the Party leadership in this strike.

If the Labour Left clearly examines the political implications of the strike, and acts upon them, it could take a great leap socialism in Britain. It is highly likely that the miners' strike will produce new political debates and contests in the Labour Party.

Left MPs call for industrial action

As members of the Campaign Group of Labour MPs, we have participated in many meetings and rallies on behalf of the NUM. At every one of the meetings, attended by members of all

trade unions, we constantly hear references to the miners' victory being a victory for all workers and for the broad trade union movement and labour movement. That statement rings true today even more than it did at the beginning of the strike because now the miners, by their tremendous fighting spirit and sacrifice, are in sight of the winning post.

Yet, as all trade unionists know, the Establishment facing defeat will use the police, judges and every means of vile propaganda in order to attack the NUM and their families.

Therefore it is important that all trade union executives should now consider not only how much more money they are prepared to contribute to the NUM Fighting Fund, but also what other steps, including industrial action, they are now ready to take in order to clinch victory in the next few weeks.

In 1972-73 the trade union movement, in its fight against the Industrial Relations Act, served notice on the Government in several ways, including taking industrial action to remove the five dockers from Penionville Gaol and put the Act in cold storage. That kind of collective action is absolutely necessary now.

We ask you to place this letter before your Executive Committee and urge you to now join with the NUM in a more effective way and turn financial and moral support into broader industrial action.

We look forward to an urgent response to our plea on behalf of the miners who we all recognise are, with the help of some railway and other workers, carrying on the industrial side of the battle single-handed.

What is your trade union prepared to do in order to broaden the action and build on the support already given?

Yours Sincerely

Joan Maynard and 38 other MPs including Tony Benn, Jo Richardson, Stuart Holland, Eric Heffer, Jeremy Corbyn, Audrey Wise et al.

How you can help

Move resolutions in your Party units and forward them to Branches supporting the miners and condemning the British Government and the National Coal Board. Forward these to the British High Commission, Canberra, ACT, 2600. Send a copy to the British National Union of Miners care of the Miners' Federation of Australia, 377 Sussex Street, Sydney, 2000.

Raise money with motions, and by taking up a collection. Donations can also be forwarded via the Australian Miners Federation at the above address.

Why the miners are striking

(Reprinted from the National Union of Miners' pamphlet "Coal not Dole.")

The future of our pits and towns is in jeopardy.

● 70 pits and 70,000 jobs at least are to go by 1988. Over 100,000 jobs will go by the year 2000.

● Government and management are attacking on all fronts. Basic wage rates are falling. Management threatens miners over the heads of the union. Rich coal reserves are sterilised or by-passed so that men can be sacked.

● Our villages and towns face decay and misery. They will be left without employment opportunities. Young people have no hope. Yet, above and underground, things could be different.

Above ground:

● Instead of starving the industry of funds, Government should pay subsidies per tonne at least at the level of other European coal industries. The money that goes into redundancies and closures should go into production.

● The nuclear programme should be halted, instead of being used to crush the mining industry.

● Imports should be stopped. Where coals, such as anthracite, are not presently available in great enough quantities, investment should be undertaken to produce them.

● Exports should be increased. Europe is supposed to be self-sufficient in energy. Yet it imports over 70 million tonnes of coal, including large quantities from South Africa!

● The Government must support new ways of using coal. Many of these are already well advanced in other countries.

● By the year 2000, if the Tory Government has its way, nuclear power will provide almost half our electricity. That may mean over 50m tonnes of coal pushed out of production or over 100,000 jobs lost.

● And the Tories have not been able to conceal their intentions. A leaked Cabinet minute of 23rd October, 1979, noted that:

"...A nuclear programme would have the advantage of removing a substantial portion of electricity from disruption by industrial action of coalminers and transport workers." The pamphlet goes on to outline how things could be different underground. Arthur Scargill has since raised the stakes in the strike, by adding to the no pit closures demand the following demands for the strike, which are also presented in the pamphlet:

● A reaffirmation by the Coal Board and the Government of the plan for Coal, the expansionist plan agreed between the Government, Coal Board and unions in 1974.

● Development of 40 million tonnes new capacity.

● New investment to expand all existing pits.

● Rapid development of new coal burning technologies.

● The introduction of a 4 day week.

● A substantial increase in wages.

● Retirement age brought down to 55.

● A scheme to protect wage rates.

Petition drive Protest repression in Turkey

The following petition is being circulated around the labour movement on behalf of the Sydney Turkish Workers Association. Headed, Protest executions and torture in Turkey, the petition was passed around at the Canberra National Conference, gaining more than 30 signatures of ALP members — including MP Ken Fry. Further copies of the petition for distribution in Branches can be obtained at the STWA (address below):

"On April 11, 265 left-wing prisoners in the Metris and Sagmalclar military jails in Istanbul in Turkey went on hunger strike to protest against torture and bad treatment.

"At the beginning of June, 15 of the hunger strikers were hospitalised in a critical condition. Recently, four of the

prisoners died, in the ninth week of their heroic struggle. They were Abdullah Merel, Haydar Basbag, Sermet Parkan of the Dev-Sol (Revolutionary Left) organisation, and Faith Okulmus of the TKIB (Union of Turkish Communists). "Lawyers for the prisoners said that Parkan had suicided by cutting his wrists; the other three had died due to their refusal to eat. The hunger strike is a last resort for the Turkish political prisoners in the face of the inhuman torture that is a constant feature of the prison regime.

"In addition, more than 300 political prisoners have been sentenced to death by Turkish military courts. These sentences are awaiting ratification by the parliament before being carried out. Altogether, there are over 5000 prisoners

sentenced on political charges.

"Already 48 have been executed. The others are likely to suffer the same fate unless international protests can halt this brutal slaughter by the military regime.

"We, the undersigned Australian Labor Party and trade union representatives and members, strongly protest these outrageous crimes by the Turkish dictatorship. We condemn all use of torture and executions of Turkish political prisoners as an assault on basic human rights.

"We urge the Australian Labor government to use all possible means to protest these human rights violations and to demand an immediate end to them.

"(Please return to: Sydney Turkish Workers Association, PO Box 169, Strawberry Hills, NSW 2022.)"

MP counters lies on Nicaragua

About 220 people attended a meeting in Sydney on July 19 to celebrate the fifth anniversary of the Nicaraguan Revolution. They were treated to a showing of Dawn of the People — a new film about the 1980 literacy campaign in Nicaragua — and a talk by Peter Milton — a Federal Labor parliamentarian from Victoria who visited both Nicaragua and Cuba early this year.

No one could visit Nicaragua, Milton said, without being impressed with the fact that so many young people are involved in running the country. And no one who had been there could deny the popularity of the Sandinista-led Government.

For these reasons Milton said he was horrified by what he heard when he observed the foreign policy debate at the National Conference. He said NSW delegate Bob Carr had told blatant lies in attacking the Nicaraguan Government and, even worse, Bill Hayden said he agreed with Carr.

Bill Hayden's claim that Nicaragua had been responsible for an unprovoked attack on Costa Rica was, in Milton's view, outrageous. Why would the Nicaraguans do such a thing, he asked, while they are desperately defending their country against constant attacks from counter-revolutionary forces based in both Honduras and Costa Rica.

He advised ALP members present to call on their local Labor MPs to direct questions in Parliament to Hayden as to the source of his information.

women's affairs

Women and Labor Conference on racism theme

More than 1500 women from all over the country attended the recent Women and Labor Conference in Brisbane on the weekend of July 13-15. The fourth of these important gatherings of women from all kinds of backgrounds and involved in many different organisations marked progress in several respects for the women's movement.

Coral Wyster

Member Darlington (NSW) Branch and Amalgamated Metals, Foundry and Shipwrights Union

The main theme of the Conference this year was racial discrimination against Aboriginal and migrant women. And, unlike previous Conferences, this one attracted a considerable number of migrant and Aboriginal women to its sessions.

Although racism was the major focus of the Conference, there were a wide variety of papers given on every conceivable topic — from economic questions, to women's health, to women and science. Workshops were given on

tenosynovitis, pornography, historical topics and many others.

While there were some feelings by a number of the Aboriginal and migrant women that their problems had not been sufficiently taken up in the Conference, this led to a much more concrete discussion by many participants of the real nature of the oppression of migrant and Black women in Australia today.

A couple of sessions on women and the economic crisis strongly criticised the ALP-ACTU Accord as helping to prevent changes necessary to defend women and all workers from the devastating effects of unemployment and falling living standards.

There were also lively discussions of the heavy burdens suffered by migrant women in the workforce and as housewives. This led to debate about how to increase the links with migrant women's groups in future.

Highlights of the Conference were the international sessions involving the two visiting women from Cuba, Isabel Jomarron and Hilda Vasallo, and the representative from the African National Congress, Gertrude Schöpe.

Jomarron and Vasallo spoke of the



Gertrude Schöpe

significant gains made by women through the Cuban Revolution and the leading role they continue to play in Cuban social life. Schöpe described the desperate oppression experienced by Black women in South Africa and the ongoing struggle against the racist Apartheid system.

All in all, the Conference resulted in a more realistic discussion of the social crisis facing women under capitalism today than in previous years.

Cuban women visit Illawarra

The two members of the delegation of Cuban women in Australia at the invitation of NSW Labor Women (see article page 28) visited the Illawarra district on July 7.

Isabel Jomarron — president of the second largest branch of the Federation of Cuban Women (FCM) and member of the Central Committee of the Cuban Communist Party — and Hilda Vasallo — from the International Department of the FMC — wanted to meet women involved in the Jobs for Women Campaign.

Robynne Murphy

Member Wollongong (NSW) Branch and Federated Ironworkers Association

The women in this campaign, who are mainly migrants, are taking court action against BHP for its discriminatory hiring practices. They fought long and hard

to win their jobs in the Port Kembla steelworks, only to lose them in the layoffs of 1982 and 1983.

Women from the campaign described their struggle to the Cubans over a lunch of Macedonian food. They explained how they had been able to use anti-discrimination legislation, introduced by the Wran Labor Government, to win jobs — and are attempting to use the same legislation to win them back.

Jomarron and Vasallo were told of the difficulties the women have faced in their fight to win back their jobs. The NSW Legal Aid Commission refused to give financial support on the grounds that the case had inadequate "merit, even though the laws have never been tested in this way before.

The Women's Advisory Commission has boosted the campaign by providing a grant of \$10,000 but it will be difficult to win through without additional legal aid. The visit of the Cubans lifted the morale of the women in the campaign.

Both Jomarron and Vasallo said that they fully supported the aim of the campaign and would take news of it back to the Federation of Cuban Women.

Jomarron and Vasallo were also given a reception dinner by women in the Labor Party. Speakers at the dinner included Stan Woodbury, representing the South Coast Labor Council; Peggy Ery, from the ALP; Fred Moore, from the Australia-Cuba Friendship Society; and Christine Kibble, from NSW Labor Women.

Also present were representatives of Chile Solidarity, the Committee in Solidarity with Central America and the Caribbean, and the Committee of Uruguayan People.

When Jomarron spoke she said she had been pleased to see the banner "Welcome companeras — your victory is our inspiration." The Cuban people, she explained, are determined to remain the inspiration of revolutionaries throughout the world.

Social Rights Campaign seminars

The Social Rights Campaign — formed in 1983 by a number of progressive unionists, ALP members and others on the basis of rejection of the wage-cutting concepts of the Prices and Incomes Accord — is holding major seminars in Sydney and Brisbane.

Sydney

Sunday August 12

Annandale Neighbourhood Centre

79 Johnston St, Annandale

10 am-12 noon: Plenary session. Speakers include Anna Pha, Victorian Trades Hall Council Executive member; Graham Roberts, President of the Port Kembla Branch FIA; and Tony Forward, National Co-ordinating Committee of the Social Rights Campaign

1 pm-2:30 pm: Workshops I: Unions, Migrants, Social Wage I; housing, pensions 2:30 pm-4 pm: Workshops II: Women, ALP, Social Wage II; health, education 4:30 pm-6 pm: Plenary session with reports.

For further information, phone 650 1052

Brisbane

Sunday September 2

Royal Geographical Auditorium

368 George St, City

8:30 am-11 am: Industry Planning: Speakers include Alan Muir, Assistant Secretary AEA

11:15 am-1:15 pm: Social Rights: Speakers include Sophie Dwyer and Lalitha Chelliah 2:15 pm-4:30 pm: Peace and foreign policy: Speakers include Ian McLean, Party of Australia

4:30 pm-6:30 pm: Budget: Speakers include Tony Forward, National Co-ordinating Committee Social Rights Campaign

How the NCC works



The following are extracts from an eight-page broadsheet called *The National Civic Council CONSPIRACY* produced by the Union Printing Co-operative, Box 156 PO Abbotsford 3667. The broadsheet contains material on the history of the NCC, its methods of operation and a number of specific case histories.

The ACTU Executive in March unanimously condemned outside interference in trade union elections. The ACTU decisions followed protests by some 17 unions over interference and deceptive practices in recent ballots in the Amalgamated Metals, Foundry & Shipwrights Union (AMFSU).

Speaking after the meeting, ACTU President Cliff Dolan revealed that he had documentary proof of the fact that the campaigns in question were being financed by the extremely conservative and sinister National Civic Council. The ACTU and the AMFSU have copies of letters from the NCC appealing for funds to attack leadership of the metal union and teachers unions in several states.

The executive also noted the deceptive use of Bob Hawke's photograph to imply the endorsement of a particular group of candidates in the AMFSU poll.

The AMFSU has been singled out for a long-running campaign aimed at toppling the union's leadership. These campaigns have cost an estimated \$50,000.

In the most recent ballot, for the relatively minor position of National Organiser, the successful challengers spent approximately \$250,000. In 1982, the same group spent \$140,000 in an unsuccessful bid for Assistant National Secretary and President positions.

The NCC's involvement in the 1982 campaign has been confirmed by the NCC itself and from a splinter group which is critical of the NCC's methods of campaigning.

For over forty years the NCC and Bob Santamaría have been parasites on the labor movement, weakening its democratic structures, undermining its influence and smearing its leaders. The NCC stands outside Australian political traditions; its secretive nature and its methods prove that it is incompatible activity and trade unionism in particular.

In recent ballots in the NSW Teachers Federation and in the Queensland Association of Teachers at Independent Schools, the NCC has been directly involved, providing both organisational and financial support.

The ACTU Executive decision cited two previous policy decisions condemning outside interference — one from the ACTU Congress in 1961 and another from the Australian Labor Party in 1962.

Those decisions also concerned the role of the NCC. NCC president B. A. Santamaría doesn't hide his organisation's

sinister dealings with trade union ballots. In fact he boasts about it.

Santamaría claims to have a legitimate interest in the labor movement's affairs. Perhaps that's why he addresses so many NCC fund-raising dinners attended by businessmen and conservative politicians.

At such dinners, Santamaría outlines his views of the trade unions, their weak points, ways in which they can be undermined, ways of toppling long-standing union officials. . . . It's a valuable service, and one, no doubt, that many businessmen will pay big money for.

There remain many unanswered questions about Santamaría and his secretive NCC; most concern their operations, their funds and their membership. But there can be no question whatsoever about his motives — time and again he's shown that he is fundamentally opposed to the very idea of independent, democratic trade unions, opposed to the policies of the Labor Party and opposed to the interests of Australian workers.

This pamphlet was produced by several unions who are concerned by the apparent revival of the NCC in the labor movement. It provides a thumbnail sketch of the NCC's operations, its motives and history will hopefully alert unionists and the community generally to the menace of the National Civic Council and its sinister conspiracy against the interests of Australian workers.

"Every active member of the NCC is fully aware that during 1981/82 he participated by way of canvassing and/or distribution of how to vote tickets in four separate campaigns in the steel and engineering industries and . . . more recently in the public service . . . and media communications."

Bob Santamaría, 1982

Case study: The Metalworkers

Undoubtedly Santamaría's prime target over the last 20 years has been the Metalworkers' Union. Repeatedly, he's singled out the union as the "jewel in the left's crown", a prize which would effectively break the back of the left in Australia.

The NCC-sponsored attacks began in the early 1960s with some very tough battles in the Amalgamated Engineering Union — the AMFSU's predecessor.

The NCC continued to agitate sporadically against the union but met with no real successes until the late '70s when a so-called "Reform Group" under the leadership of Rod Kelly launched a series of vitriolic and expensive campaigns to seize control of leading positions in the union.

Kelly himself has stood for election in 1980 (against Jack Kidforian Secretary) and in 1982 (against Dick Scott for National President) . . . On all occasions he has been defeated. But the costs of the campaigns have been enormous.

In 1982, Kelly sponsored a team to stand against Laurie Carmichael (for Assistant National Secretary) and Dick Scott (National President). That campaign, which again was unsuccessful, was estimated to have cost \$140,000.

Interviewed in the "Australian" (3.7.82), Santamaría explicitly denied that the NCC was funding the campaign to elect Miller and Kelly. "We have not got the money to put into that campaign," he said.

Asked whether the NCC had supplied the manpower to address thousands of envelopes by hand, Santamaría said: "As many key union where a communist team is opposed by an anti-

communist team we have done everything in our power to support the anti-communist team. That applies to the AMWSU."

However, Gerald Mercer speaking on the ABC's AM program revealed that the NCC had put \$140,000 into the AMWSU campaign in support of Kelly's team. A leaflet from the Industrial Action Fund also criticised the NCC's "expenditure of \$140,000 and the mailing out of large volumes of propaganda supporting Carmichael's opponents".

The NCC was again exposed when Jim Naqvi who was elected South Australian Assistant Secretary of the AMWSU in 1982, repudiated the NCC after it refused him financial assistance to meet court costs involved with the ballot.

Mark Posa, SA President of the NCC wrote in "News Weekly" (12.5.82): "Of course I gave assistance to Mr Naqvi, when he requested it . . . I would have been ashamed to refuse.

"Help was given to him to obtain his legal rights, which were ultimately upheld by the Federal Court . . . He was helped to pursue his campaign for the position of Assistant Secretary. . . ."

Naqvi wrote: "I make no secret that I sought financial assistance from many organisations in my election campaign, including the National Civic Council. I make no secret that I did receive financial support . . ."

"I now realise that some people who supported me did not have my interests at heart, nor the interests of my union and our members."

Additional confirmation of the NCC's role in the Naqvi ballot came with the split between the Industrial Action Fund and the NCC. An IAF pamphlet criticised two well-publicised campaigns in the Metalworkers which "had only succeeded in placing one man, Jim Naqvi . . ."

The IAF pamphlet also went on to criticise the NCC's role in the Kelly group's bid to oust Carmichael and Scott in 1982:

"The expenditure of \$140,000 (!!) and the mailing out of large volumes of propaganda supporting Carmichael's opponents was no substitute for organisation of which they had none.

"In the event, Carmichael won, and his opponent, Kelly, subsequently repudiated the NCC."

In the recent ballot for national organiser and nine National Conference delegates in Queensland, it is estimated that the reform group spent about \$250,000 nationally in printed and radio advertising and publicity. There has still been no evidence of any fundraising within the union's membership by the Kelly group.

Here's just some of the activities of this operation:

- At least 10 separate leaflets, some being four page fold-out with inserts. Four leaflets were posted to members and every member received at least two leaflets. (107,000 members were entitled to vote.) By contrast, the left candidates could afford only one leaflet.

- Professionally produced radio advertisements were carried by ten Queensland radio stations (cost \$10,000) plus ads on regional TV stations.

- Three half-page ads in the Sydney Daily Telegraph (cost: \$6,903)

- Thousands of AMFSU members were individually canvassed by telephone in Queensland, NSW and Victoria.

- Months of air travel, expensive hotel accommodation, hire cars for several individuals.

- Legal costs of court actions against the union (including hire of a Queen's Counsel).

Kelly and members of his group have denied allegations about outside funding of their campaign and NCC money in particular.

A 1983 fund-raising letter from the NCC President Mark Posa provides a candid view of the NCC's attitude to both the AMFSU and teacher unions.

"Regrettably, governments of whatever complexion, have little effect on the power of communist union leaders like Carmichael. Yet, last year, as a result of a massive, well-organised campaign, Carmichael and Halfpenny were brought to the brink of defeat in their own unions. What was nearly done, now has to be completed . . ."

Posa then appeals for funds to further the NCC's work for 1983.

Posa elaborated on the NCC's involvement in union ballots in a similar circular for the NCC's 1984 appeal:

"The real fight against socialist left influence within the Labor movement lies, not in political manoeuvring at an ALP Federal Conference, but in the grass-roots struggle to eliminate communist control of the two largest and wealthiest unions in Australia — the Metalworkers and the Australian Teachers Federation."

"With over 180,000 members, the AMFSU is the largest union in Australia. Its accumulated assets run into millions. Together with its annual income of \$13 million, it is perhaps the wealthiest as well."

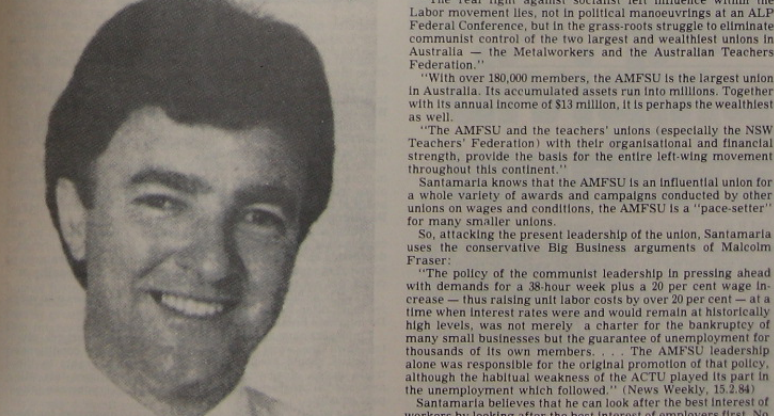
"The AMFSU and the teachers' unions (especially the NSW Teachers Federation) with their organisational and financial strength, provide the basis for the entire left-wing movement throughout this continent."

Santamaría knows that the AMFSU is an influential union for a whole variety of awards and campaigns conducted by other unions on wages and conditions, the AMFSU is a "pace-setter" for many smaller unions.

So, attacking the present leadership of the union, Santamaría uses the conservative Big Business arguments of Malcolm Fraser:

"The policy of the communist leadership in pressing ahead with demands for a 38-hour week plus a 20 per cent wage increase — thus raising unit labor costs by over 20 per cent — at a time when interest rates were and would remain at historically high levels, was not merely a charter for the bankruptcy of many small businesses but the guarantee of unemployment for thousands of its own members. . . . The AMFSU leadership alone was responsible for the original promotion of that policy, although the habitual weakness of the ACTU played its part in the unemployment which followed." (News Weekly, 15.2.84)

Santamaría believes that he can look after the best interest of workers by looking after the best interest of employers first. No wonder the NCC has such a sizeable bankroll.



Rod Kelly

unions

NSW unions launch anti-racist campaign

Following the major debate which has broken out in recent months over immigration, and the growth of racist attacks on Asian migrants in particular, a committee has been established in Sydney by 24 major unions to combat this political threat to the labour movement.

The Combined Unions Against Racism group was originally established following a series of violent attacks and threats against migrant and progressive organisations in Sydney over the past six months. Responsibility for these assaults has been claimed by racist and neo-fascist forces identifying themselves with the National Action and other extreme-right wing groups.

At a public launching on July 24, the CUAR released a mass-circulation pamphlet to begin a campaign to combat the influence of racist ideas and organisations.

The pamphlet, entitled, 'Racism: dividing workers', has been printed in an initial run of 20,000 for distribution throughout NSW at various workplaces.

Keynote speakers at the launching were Federal Minister for Immigration and Ethnic Affairs Stewart West and State Youth and Community Affairs Minister Frank Walker.

Both ministers condemned the spreading of racist ideas by right-wing organisations and individuals, and the endorsement of this campaign by the Liberal Party. Walker also called for a strong fight against racism and fascism, which like Nazi Germany, tries to blame minorities for the economic ills of our society.

West, Walker, and other speakers from the Trade Union Committee for Aboriginal Rights and Australians for Racial Equality, applauded the launching of the union anti-racist campaign.

We reprint below major excerpts from the CUAR pamphlet. Further copies of the publication can be obtained by writing to: Combined Unions Against Racism, P.O. Box 204, Broadway, NSW 2007.

'Racism: dividing workers'

Racism — attacking someone purely because of their race — is making a comeback in Australia.

Sadly, while Australia is one of the most mixed societies in the world, some people are starting to say we'd be better off if we were all the same.

And it is the recent arrivals — particularly the Indo-Chinese refugees — who are being singled out. But it is all ethnic groups who are under threat. Racism has one purpose: to divide workers and help the bosses force down wages and conditions.

During an employment slump, like today, it catches on more quickly, as some workers blame other workers for lost jobs rather than blaming the system itself.

That's why trade unions are so opposed to it.

And that's why the employers and their friends in the Liberal Party are trying to win votes by distorting the truth and exciting anti-Asian feelings.

Are there more South East Asian migrants than other groups? There are approximately 90,000 Indo-Chinese refugees in humanitarian grounds. Now, they are exercising their rights to



'Me and my shadows.'

bring out close family members to join them in Australia, like other immigrants can.

But this year there are still only 10,000 Indo-Chinese migrating to Australia. That's about 15 percent of the total.

Why don't we bring more people from Britain?

British people are still the largest single group migrating to Australia. But because of our high unemployment, fewer of them are interested in coming.

The Fraser Government brought British tradesmen out here to work for BHP, but after a couple of months they got the sack along with thousands of other workers. Once British workers heard of incidents like this, they weren't so keen to come here.

Do migrants take jobs?

Immigrants don't cause unemployment. That's caused by a combination of things: the capitalist system, the worldwide recession, and the policies of the Fraser Liberal Government.

Employers sack people. Workers, no matter what nationality or race, are not to blame for unemployment.

In fact in a slump, it's the immigrants and Aborigines who suffer most, often losing their jobs before others.

Do migrants break down wages and conditions?

Employers have always tried to exploit migrant workers, giving them the worst paid jobs, often in unsafe conditions. Trade Unions should involve the newly-arrived migrants in the need special programs within the unions, so everyone can take part equally.

That's why it's important for all workers to campaign for the right to learn English on the job, so all workers understand

whats going on and can be fully involved in the union. It's one sure way to stop migrant workers being exploited and to protect everyone's wages and conditions.

Many migrants have been active trade unionists in their home countries. Some have had little experience. It's up to other unionists to involve them in Australian unions, so all workers can co-operate to demand better conditions and defend the unions.

That's happening now with recent arrivals, such as Indo-Chinese, Turkish and Lebanese workers.

Who is behind the campaign against Asian migrants?

There are basically two groups campaigning against Asian migration. One is the Liberal and National Party, who by their policies want to divide workers from each other and make political mileage out of the issue. The others are groups like National Action, the White Australia Movement and the League of Rights, who all hold openly racist and fascist views.

Fascists? Surely nobody would take any notice of them?

These groups aren't large, but they use terrorist tactics against migrants and other people they say are 'inferior'.

National Action and other groups have bashed Asian people and other migrants. They have firebombed the offices of people opposing them and attacked homes of trade unionists. They have attacked groups as different as Community Aid Abroad, the Movement Against Uranium Mining, bookshops, overseas students, and representatives of ethnic groups. They are the small group who paint slogans on walls and railway tunnels, always under the cover of darkness.

Is it only Asian people they oppose?

While Asians have borne the brunt of attacks, all migrants, particularly progressive migrants, are under threat. And while in government, the Liberal Party has always had a history of trying to stop trade unionists and other progressive people from migrating to Australia, for purely political reasons.

Why are the Liberals making so much noise about it now?

The Liberals are desperate for support in the next election. They'll do anything to try and win votes. They are deliberately trying to exploit ignorance and fear among working people based on the colour of someone's skin. If they succeed, they'll take us straight back to the Fraser years, with record unemployment, inflation and all the other problems.

Under the Liberal government, unemployment and inflation got worse, while wages were cut. Faced with the success of the Labor government, they have seized on the migration question to try to win a few votes.

Does that mean the Liberals are racist?

The Liberals say they aren't racist, but from what they've said on migration, they certainly sound like they are. By raising the issues the way they have, they have provided a respectable front for the violent racists. And many of their members are quite openly anti-semitic and racist.

Put simply, if they play in the mud, they get muddy, no matter what they say they are doing.

Is all this talk about Asians anything new?

While anti-Asian feeling is getting the headlines, all migrants have experienced hatred and prejudice from a minority when they first came here. Ask your Italian, Greek, Lebanese or Latin American workmates what happened to them when they first came to Australia. And all racial groups still suffer some bigotry.

But it's new to find the Liberal Party trying to whip up that hatred further. They are also trying to stir up hatred against Aborigines, by joining with the big mining companies and the fascist groups in a campaign against Aboriginal land rights.

Can migrants fit into Australian society?

Australia is made up of hundreds of different communities from different countries. They have all become a part of a multi-cultural Australian society, while keeping their own culture. Australia is better off because of this and most people live together with tolerant understanding.

It's only a small group who try to keep racial hatred alive. Tolerance of racial, religious and cultural differences is essential for our way of life. Hatred and bigotry will undermine it.



dividing workers

This leaflet has been produced and authorised by the Combined Unions Against Racism. CUAR is a group of trade unions which have joined together to promote equality and to fight racism in our society. CUAR unions include: Plumbers and Gasfitters Employees Union, Australian Workers Union, Printing and Kindred Industries Union, Amalgamated Metals, Foundry and Shipwrights Union, Australian Theatrical Amusement Employees Association, Federated Miscellaneous Workers Union, Administrative and Clerical Officers Association, Federated Engine Drivers and Firemen's Association, Australian Journalists Association, Water and Sewerage Employees Association, Australian Railways Union, University Academic Staff Association, Building Workers Industrial Union, Firemen and Deckhands Union, Australasian Meat Industry Union, Builders Labourers Federation, Federation of College Academics, Actors Equity.

Write to CUAR: PO Box 204, Broadway, 2007

ethnic affairs

Interview with Andrew Jacobowicz

Racism, migration and the labour movement

Times of recession are marked by an intensification in attempts to divide and divert the working class from the real causes of the problems they face. One classic example of such divisive tactics is racism.

It is not surprising to note the increase in racist statements made by prominent political, business and academic figures over the past year which have been avidly picked up and amplified by the media. Land rights and anti-Aboriginal sentiments have been rabidly expressed by big mining interests like Hugh Morgan and by the National Farmers lobby. Peacock, Hodgman and Blainey have concentrated on the question of immigration policy.

In this climate of an escalation of racist statements Labor Militant interviewed Andrew Jacobowicz, a member of the Board of the Special Broadcasting Service which runs the Government ethnic broadcasting program. Andrew is a member of the Wollongong ALP Branch and teaches sociology at the University of Wollongong.

Q: What do you see as the role of the ALP in immigration policy and racism?

A: I think the Labor Party has been and is constrained by the policy and underlying assumptions and definitions of the Fraser Government because of the bipartisan approach they adopted towards immigration, multiculturalism, etc. over the past decade. Because of this bipartisan approach, the Party has avoided the class issues involved in these areas.

Now we're faced with a policy and a framework which is really quite shallow, and which has in fact disarmed the Government at the level of cultural struggle from addressing some of the central issues to do with racism. What the Labor Party is facing now is the result of its own decision to go soft on

what multi-culturalism might mean and accept a view which, while it is to the left of the mainstream of the conservative parties, is nevertheless not addressing the interests of the working class in Australia.

Q: Could you give some examples of this?

A: One of the most obvious examples can be found in the philosophy of multiculturalism, taking firstly settlement issues, and then migration policy. The settlement issues are covered basically by the Gabbally Report and implemented by the Fraser Government.

The Gabbally Report was set up to allow quite conservative policies on welfare to be introduced in relation to settlement. There's a lot of emphasis on self-help and voluntarism, and a movement away from any responsibility for the conditions of employment, for instance, of workers in the welfare industry.

A lot of money is going to small organisations which couldn't possibly survive and provide an effective welfare service. But these small organisations have been important in providing the leaders crucial in setting up political alliances with the conservative parties.

Q: What exactly do you mean by settlement issues?

A: They are issues of welfare provision to migrants when they arrive, education and so on. In each and every one of those areas there have been real cuts.

Real cuts in the quality of education under the conservative government have been disguised behind a great deal of rhetoric and self-congratulation by the conservatives about how much they are doing for migrants.

In fact, if you look at what happened, most of what has been spent was paid for by working-class migrants themselves. The additional money expended under

Gabbally — some 50 odd million dollars on migrant welfare, education and so on — was paid for by the Government cutting the rights of working-class migrants to claim for dependants living overseas. This brought in about \$72 million. Yet the overseas dependants' claim had been one of the major successes of the migrant workers' movement of the early '70s, and that was lost under Fraser.

But the Labor Party acceded to it, agreed with most of Gabbally, probably because it did not recognise the class and political issues involved. And they were convinced by people like McPhee and Mackellar that, while there might be differences in detail, they should agree in principle to the direction of that policy.

The effect of that in terms of dealing with racism for instance have been quite dramatic. The Government has no "on the ground" program to combat racism effectively except through the Human Rights Commission. And that's a particularly slow and laborious process.

The total commitment to combatting racism by the Labor government in its first year of office was \$200,000 to be put aside for spot advertisements on racial tolerance on television.

That is the sum total of the Labor Government's commitment to date in this area. And that was something they inherited from the conservatives. That was the recommendation under Fraser.

The other side of it is the migration program itself. Generally there has been bipartisan support for the way in which the current migration selection process works, which is to give the greatest priority to family reunion. You give a certain level of priority to refugees, and you cut back on employer nominations, independent migration and so on.

The effect of that, given the way in which migration works, is obviously going to increase the number of Asian migrants coming in. They are the ones who have come in most recently under the other parts of the program and are the ones undergoing the process of family formation and reorganisation in Australia, so they are going to increase more rapidly in the migration figures.

Q: wasn't there an emphasis on the South East Asian region given to foreign policy? Is there a similar emphasis in migration policy?

A: Yes, there is an element of turning towards Asia. But if you look at the actual structure of the refugee intake over the last five years or so, particularly under the conservatives, there is a very strong commitment to saving the "victims of Communist aggression".

That was highlighted very dramatically under Fraser. In the wake of the Russian invasion of Afghanistan and in the wake of martial law declaration in Poland. In the '80-81 period in particular there was a very strong Government commitment, to the point of actively funding the escape to Australia of Polish

refugees, to so-called political refugees. Many of these, I suppose, could be seen to be migrants facing extreme economic hardship in Poland but not normally seen to be facing extreme political repression. Obviously some of them might have been.

However for many thousands who left, had they gone back, they would obviously have faced a hard or hard-ish time explaining why they had got out. But it is unlikely that they would have faced, for instance, the death squads and the annihilation the Left face in places like El Salvador or other places in Central or South America.

Q: So the Labor Party has just continued on with this emphasis?

A: The Labor Party has accepted the refugee program as an important part of the overall migration package. The Minister, Stewart West, has made an active attempt to reduce the proportion of and has opened it up to people fleeing right-wing oppression.

But there is a lot of debate about how effective that has been, particularly in the light of revelations in the ASIO Annual Report that went to Parliament, and has opened it up to people fleeing throughout the world.

ASIO has already given a demonstration of exactly how much power it has in the Combe-Ivanov affair. That is still an open wound that needs to be looked at before we reach any solid conclusions.

But generally, the other element in the migration program is the most important thing to understand. Traditionally the migration program was concerned about restricting minority races entering Australia.

In the mid sixties that changed to emphasis on workers from Europe and Asia Minor, and Asian bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie. We are still in the position that, except for the refugee program, it is almost impossible for the Asian proletariat to enter Australia. And that continues today.

It is also the case that with the exception of people from some of the refugee camps, most of the family reunion is occurring amongst families from Indochina who were either professional or middle-class in their countries of origin. However, their class position in Australia might be very different from that. The vast majority of Indochinese are either unemployed or industrial workers, whatever their class origins.

Q: You mentioned anti-discrimination against working-class Asians gaining entrance. Are there other forms of discrimination?

A: There is still a great deal of difficulty about families with disabled members who would like to enter the country. The policy on that is very unclear.

While normally people who are likely



Migrants arriving from Europe.

to become "a burden on the Australian health system" are excluded and so are their families, in some instances they are allowed in. There have been cases in the last year where families with disabled members who have come in on temporary or visitors' visas, have applied for permanent residence.

They have then kicked up a hell of a stink and have managed to convince the Minister that they should be allowed to stay. But generally families with disabled members still can't get in.

The situation with gays is very unclear too. The impression I have after the last few months is that the Sydney gay community has made a particular point about discrimination against the partners of legally resident Australian gays who are liable to deportation for breach of the law.

Had they been the opposite sex, and living with the other person and able to demonstrate a permanent relationship, they would not be deported. I understand the Minister has now agreed to change the ruling on that.

Q: What about that whole White Australia tradition? You've mentioned Asian and regional migration, but what of the question of Black African and coloured refugee status from the

Apartheid system in South Africa? How do our rules of entry and our selection programs apply?

A: Recently the first group of Black African refugees, I think from Ethiopia, arrived in Australia and that's really quite a historic change. The question of refugees from Apartheid is still open, partly because it's not part of the South African Black consciousness that Australia is the sort of place you want to go to to escape from Apartheid — particularly given our international reputation about our treatment of Aborigines.

Q: That's just Black South Africans?

A: Yes. In terms of white South Africans, there are a lot of English white South Africans who have come to South Africa, for instance, has a huge number of South African and former Rhodesian citizens, and over the past few years it has been one of the centres of racist agitation.

This can partially be located in the former Rhodesian and white South African community who have left Africa, not because they fear for their lives, but because they fear that the Blacks, through the South African Government, might actually take over in South Africa

Continued on page 24.

Jacobowicz

Continued from page 23.

as they did in Zimbabwe. They see Australia as the last bastion against the coloured races.

Q: So they are seeing it very much as a protection of their own interests?

A: It's not that direct. I think actually that South African and Rhodesian migration is made up of a number of different elements. You can't label it as a totality, but there is very clearly a racist component there.

Q: So in fact you are saying it's the ALP's overall policy is just a continuation of Fraser with some minor liberalising of various aspects. But are these minor steps working effectively or are there problems?

A: There are a couple of things to take into account. Firstly, the Labor Government has cut the overall number of migrants coming into the country quite dramatically, and that's quite a serious policy change.

It has moved away from the position taken by most of the large business organisations that a large number of migrants is per se a good thing because it increases demand for goods and that's good for industry. The Labor Party has taken the general view that overall migrants put pressure on the Australian labour market. It's a different focus as to where the problems in the Australian economy lie and how migration relates to those problems.

Secondly, there has been an attempt to move the migration program to the left somewhat by putting greater emphasis on people who fear for their lives under right-wing regimes.

However, what they have just started to address partially, but in the main haven't yet come to grips with, is the general conservatism and right-wing tendencies of the Immigration Department as an organisation. This Department is still very much rooted in the policy directions of the Fraser years and is generally greatly influenced by the results of the conservative policy of who should be let into Australia and who shouldn't. This is one of the main problems of existing policy.

Q: You mention that Labor policy is orientated much more around the pressures on employment and the labour market. How much of this is a direct result of the trade unions exerting that pressure on the ALP?

A: I think the problems for the labour movement have always been that while not wishing to be racist (and there is obviously a quite progressive element within the labour movement), there is a

recognition that immigrants can represent a real threat. Particularly those immigrants who don't speak English and who don't come from traditions of labour organisation that the Australian labour movement has developed over the years, represent a potential threat to the conditions and the negotiating power of the labour movement here.

Some unions have been very successful in education programs for migrant workers so that there has been less of a problem, but it's simply the case that if you have a larger pool of labour, employers have more people to choose from. Employers who are prepared to operate in poor working conditions have a larger number of people not aware of their rights to draw from and they can continue to do that.



Malcolm Fraser. Labor leaders have accepted his government's framework on migration policy.

I think the labour movement is aware of that. It's always been in a double bind about what it ought to do. Whether it ought to attack the migration program for letting in people who dilute the labour militancy of the working class or not attack the program at all because it could be seen to be racist by so doing.

I think that's the classic indication of the double bind. There is no solution to that problem within a capitalist system because that's what the function of labour migration has always been — to increase the pool of labour available to capital.

The labour movement has never resolved that problem and I doubt if it ever will within the current system. The most I think it can try is to accept or recognise the contradiction, and not see

the immigrants who actually arrive here as a threat.

Instead they should see them as comrades facing exploitation by unscrupulous employers, who need to be reached and whose rights need to be protected and defended in the Australian context. That's a very difficult thing to know how to do easily but I think that's the issue.

There is pressure on West from Cabinet to actually reduce the number of people coming in, ostensibly because of the unemployment question. I think it's more likely because it gives them something political to go back to their electorates with and say, "Look, we actually are doing something about reducing Asian migration".

The other thing of course is that migrants have always historically absorbed the brunt of the unemployment. The unemployment rates between Lebanese and Vietnamese migrants is up between 30 and 40 per cent, and they cushion to some extent the rest of the Australian workforce from the pressures of unemployment. So there are all those sort of issues tied up in the issue.

Q: What will the racist attacks and rhetoric that is coming out now mean to the trade unions?

A: It will probably reinforce the more conservative unions. The sort of action taken by the Vehicle Builders in releasing their survey of members' so-called concerns about Asian migration, or migration more generally, I think is probably a more retrograde step.

All unions have to be responsible for their actions. You can't just do something like that without accepting that you are operating in a highly political milieu.

On the other hand there is a very strong recognition inside the ACTU and amongst some of the more progressive unions that racism is an immediate issue to be tackled and that they can't simply get swept up in the right-wing rhetoric.

The unions have their own history to contend with. They have traditionally seen the migrant issue as always a minor or subordinate issue in terms of their own organisation.

To some extent that works as much on the Left as it does on the Right. It means coming to terms with the fact that they haven't historically actively sought to provide outlets through which minority groups can reach positions of real influence and power in the union.

That's now coming home to roost. The problem of recruiting minority groups to fill organiser positions and on, has been a comparatively recent thing.

As far as I know there are still no Asian organisers, full-time paid union officials, in NSW in any union I can think of, and I wouldn't think there were any more in the country. Until that starts to happen I think the unions are going to have a hard time handling racism on the shop floor.

party machinery

Migrant Branches develop in Vic ALP

One of the phenomena over the past six years in the Victorian ALP has been the development of migrant Branches. There are approximately 17 migrant Branches in the Victorian Party at the moment.

In most, not all, of these Branches only the language of the country of origin of the members is used to conduct Branch business. This obviously gives migrants a genuine opportunity to become familiar with the Party's mode of functioning, its structure, and its policies. This is an opportunity for migrants to attempt to participate in the affairs of the Party in a real way.

Relhana Mohideen

Member Braybrook (Vic) Branch

One of the more recent migrant Branches of the Party is the Moreland Branch, which is a Turkish Branch formed in 1981, in the Wills Federal Electoral Assembly. Certain areas in the Wills FEA have a very high proportion of Turkish migrants.

Huriyet Babajan, Branch secretary, had this to say about some of the initial problems that the Branch faced:

"Gerry Hand (now MHR for Melbourne) was an organiser for the Party at the time and he assisted us in the formation of the Branch. The Branch started to grow rapidly. Turkish people, the bulk of them ALP voters, saw the opportunities a Branch of this nature provided them. They saw it as an important link between the Turkish community and the Party, and saw it as a way of influencing the Party in government.

"Initially we organised seminars, documentaries, etc. on Turkey. But once again, in organising the Branch, one of the problems we came up against was the lack of English, so that most of the organising and liaison work fell on the shoulders of one or two people who could speak English.

"You see, it's very hard, initially, for a new Branch in a new community to relate to the Party structure, its rules etc.

"The members found it very hard to relate to the Party. (This is not just a problem for Turkish members. It's a problem for most rank and file members when the Party implements policies and pursues a program quite contrary to their interests.)

"So we found ourselves getting

isolated and drifting back into the Turkish community, instead of reaching out to the rest of the Party and getting involved in the life of the Party. We also had a large turnover in members at one point because they could not see how the Party related to their activities and lives.

"But we have seen some results in getting action around some of the demands of the Turkish migrants. This was mainly in the area of funding, in getting more Turkish teachers, etc.

"So such short-term solutions could be found through the Party. Migrants should organise as a pressure group, as lobbyists if you like, to put pressure on the Party to get some of their needs met.

"The Turkish members are also looking at issues such as unemployment and inflation. We have always known unemployment and some members even accepted it, putting it down to their lack of English.

"But now it's affecting the second generation of Turkish migrants, let their children, who can speak English. So they can see now that just knowing English is not enough, they still suffer unemployment.

Babajan also said that there had been attempts to set up a Turkish Branch in Richmond, and that there were some possibilities of setting up a Branch in Broadmeadows.

The Greek community is the largest single group represented in the migrant Branches. There are approximately 13 Greek Branches at the moment.

The Greek Branches have been established since 1975. In order to organise themselves more effectively they have recently set up a 'central committee' to co-ordinate their work and to liaise between the Branches and



Huriyet Babajan

the Party.

It is rumoured that there is pressure coming from the Greek Branches to give this body more power, rather than it being a mere co-ordinating committee, the power to elect their own delegates to conferences and even choose their own MPs. The name itself suggests that the Greek members had in mind a body with more teeth than just a coordinating committee.

There are three Italian Branches in the Party, and the Spanish and Lebanese communities are being organised in Branches as well.

The migrant Branches are a positive development in the Party, allowing non-Australian born members to begin to organise politically in the Labor movement.

Nevertheless, migrants still have an uphill task ahead of them in attempting to get proper representation in the Party and in making the policies of the Party respond to their needs.

There is also an Aboriginal Branch in Victoria, the only one in the State, which was formed less than a year ago at Yorta Yorta near Shepparton.

The Victorian Aboriginal Policy Committee is looking at the possibilities for starting up other Aboriginal Branches, in particular in the urban areas, but also in country areas where there are closely knit Aboriginal communities.



Migrants begin to organise through ethnic Branches.

WA dispute on uranium

The Western Australian Branch has on a number of occasions made it clear its strong opposition to uranium mining.

Stephen Robson

Member Fremantle (WA) Branch and Administrative and Clerical Officers Association

At the April State Executive meeting of the Party it was declared the "interpretation of State Branch policy on uranium to be opposed to mining and export of uranium, and to call for a phasing out of all existing mines without any escalation of activity at any existing mine."

Yet within three months of this, the majority of the WA delegates to the National Conference had voted for the official pro-uranium resolution.

Of the 11 delegates from Western Australia, six voted in favor of uranium

mining. These were Premier Brian Burke, Minister for Minerals and Energy Peter Walsh, Kim Beazley, State Secretary Michael Betan, convener of the Centre Left Peter Cook, and ex-Left and now an adviser to Burke, Bill Thomas.

This betrayal brought a sharp response from the delegates who voted against uranium mining.

Jim Kleran, the convener of the Socialist Caucus in WA, and an official with the Amalgamated Metals, Foundry and Shipwrights Union, criticised State Secretary Behan and Bill Thomas for not backing the Branch position. McKiernan pointed out that the delegates were elected on an anti-uranium platform.

Thomas also refused to put the Branch position of opposition to the use of Australian port facilities for ships that might carry nuclear arms. Instead Thomas moved for the Australian Government to consult with the U.S. to reduce the frequency of such visits.

Six members of the Sydney Inner-city Branch of Annandale have been recommended for expulsion by the Disputes Committee of the State Branch. The charges arise from their support for Independent candidates in recent local government elections in the Municipality of Leichhardt.

Those charged include long-term left-wing Party activists Hal Greenland and Tony Harris. And the independents they supported included prominent labour movement identities and former ALP members Nick Origlass and Izzy Wyner.

Origlass and Wyner have a history in the labour movement dating back to the 1940s and were expelled from the ALP by the right wing for supporting residents' rights against the building of container depots in Balmain in the '60s.

After their expulsion they were elected to the Leichhardt Council as independents and Origlass was elected mayor. They lost their positions on Council in 1980 but were re-elected this year.

They were defeated in 1980 by prominent members of the ALP Left faction, the Steering Committee. The Council with divisions which helped pave the way for an electoral backlash in 1984.

Greenland and Harris say the charges against them are the result of personal and political vendettas. Their support for

Ruth Coleman reports on Conference

A meeting organised by Labor Militant supporters here on July 17 heard Senator Ruth Coleman and anti-uranium activist Chuck Bozmas speak on the recent Conference. Coleman was an observer at the Conference and provided a first-hand account of debates over uranium and East Timor.

Stephen Robson

Member Fremantle (WA) Branch and the Administrative and Clerical Officers Association

Coleman pointed to the role of the Centre Left, or "Centre Right" as they are now dubbed, as not playing an independent role. Instead they came in fully behind the right wing.

Coleman explained that a number of the Centre had justified their stance by claiming that they had hoped to save face for the Prime Minister, but that they would be able to take the issues up later in Caucus. Coleman pointed to the fallacy of this approach, pointing out that Hawke would use the Conference platform against Caucus.

Coleman said that now was the time for the Left to begin organising for the next Conference.

Origlass and Wyner have been well known for many years and they have canvassed support for them in earlier election campaigns.

According to Greenland and Harris the Member of Parliament for the State seat of Balmain, Peter Crawford, has displayed hypocrisy in supporting moves to have them expelled because they allege, he has also co-operated with Origlass and Wyner in past Council elections and in organising takeovers of a number of local Branches in the area in the late 1970s and early '80s.

They also say that Crawford and other Steering Committee leaders are aware that left-wingers in some Inner-city Branches also supported independents against endorsed Labor candidates in elections for the Sydney City Council, yet no charges were laid against them.

Harris told Labor Militant that the Steering Committee has long been trying to force the "dissidents" in the Annandale Branch out of the Party. In its effort to gain rigid control over local bodies, it is still engaged in a battle for control of the State Electorate Council in the seat held by former Labor leader Pat Hills.

The recommendation of the Disputes Committee will go to the Administrative Committee for a decision in early August.

reviews

Tas Labor: Successes and failures

Eighty Years' Labor

By Richard Davis
Sassafras Books and the History Department,
University of Tasmania

Since its founding in June 1903, the Tasmanian section of the Australian Labor Party has been in office for 52 years — making it the most electorally successful State Branch in its State Parliament. Internationally, only the Social-Democratic Party in Sweden can rival this record.

Lou-ann Barker

Member Emu Bay (Tas) Branch

Richard Davis' history of the Party provides a useful narrative of the forces that moulded it, of the secrets of its success and the failures that have now brought it to the lowest ebb since 1931.

A product of the drive by trade unions to enter politics, Tasmanian Labor was marked by the division between the numerous small craft unions in Hobart and Launceston and the larger industrial-based unions of the West Coast. In fact the mobilisation of the West Coast miners in the first Federal elections in 1901 had ensured the election of King O'Malley, who joined the Federal Labor Caucus and was later to become a minister in the John Watson and Andrew Fisher Governments.

The West Coast miners represented the majority of the delegates at the initial conference, and provided the organisation that saw the first labor members in the Tasmanian Parliament.

But the mining unions (the AWU in its main), and the other industrial unions that came to be established as industry spread were always under-represented in the peak councils of the trade-union



'Electric' Eric Reece — Labor premier in the '60s who championed 'hydroindustrialisation'

movement, especially in the Tasmanian Trades and Labor Council. The NCC took over the highly undemocratic TTL (then called the Hobart Trades Hall Council) in the early 1960s. But its structure had been established much earlier, and helped ensure the continual demobilisation of Tasmanian workers, and that left politics to the politicians and the union officials.

The influence of the National Civic Council, or political currents that are close to it, was only reinforced by Harradine's takeover of the TTL, and his emergence into the Party hierarchy. In fact the DLP split was not as complete in Tasmania as it had been in Victoria, because of Premier Robert Cosgrove's known preference for the groupers, and the general influence of the right in the Party machine.

At the Federal elections that followed the split, Tasmania did return one DLP senator, but its vote in two House of Representative seats was even less than that for the Communist Party.

The founding conference adopted the aim of abolition of the Tasmanian Upper House, the legislative Council, but the most undemocratic chamber in any Australian parliament still remains after all these years. Davis concludes that most Tasmanian Labor governments were happy to have the Council block legislation that the politicians didn't want.

In fact the Party has never seriously attempted to even get a majority in the Upper House, let alone wage a campaign for its abolition. It has never had more than five members in the chamber of 19

This fact undermines the intensely conservative character of Tasmanian Labor governments. The Party machine has too often been a vehicle for the personal ambitions of members to make a career in parliament, and the more successful the electoral record became, the more it attracted people on that basis.

And if the Party took office at your policies? In a long-established tradition, you can leave and stand as an independent. Joe Lyons in the 1930s and Brian Harradine in the 1970s are only two better known right-wingers who fled the Party when opportunity called.

In the end, the secret of the electoral success of the Party in Tasmania has been its ability to cater to the ruling wealthy, who have rarely felt the need to campaign for a conservative party instead.

This is the political basis of "hydroindustrialisation," which provided cheap power for major corporations. So long as it also provided jobs, the Party enjoyed the support of a natural majority — when unemployment began, many Tasmanians could see no reason to destroy wilderness.

Richard Davis gives some evidence for alternative currents in the Party during its history.

Unfortunately, many of these could best be described as "funny money" schemes, such as the popularity of Henry George's single tax idea before the First World War, and Douglas social credit theories right into the 1940s. Too often these ideas were confused with a clear socialist program — but in any case no premier was going to put them into practice "because the Upper House wouldn't wear it."

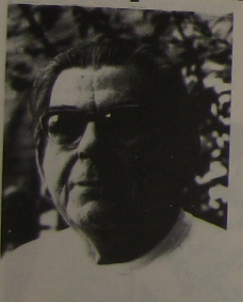
The most radical period of the Party's history came in 1920 when the State Conference adopted a resolution for the complete socialisation of the means of production, and for the formation of the One Big Union. So complete was support for this resolution that even Joe Lyons spoke for it in order to get into parliament!

Tasmanian delegates to the subsequent Brisbane Federal Conference supported the motion, which had already had the backing of the Melbourne all-Australian union meeting. In the event, the resolution was ruled out of order, and the Party's much milder "socialisation objective" was adopted.

This marked the end of the fighting period of the Party in Tasmania. After 1924 it closed down its daily newspaper (published since 1909), so losing its ability to give the lie to the media barons.

Richard Davis's book is an invaluable history. At times it is too light on material that would explain different events, keeping to a narrative of the currents and forces that became the mainstream of the Party. For example, what was the circulation of the Party's press? But it is a useful book, all the same.

ALP 'dissidents' face expulsion



Nick Origlass



Brian Harradine — with Joe Lyons among Tasmania's better known Labor rats

solidarity

NSW Labor Women's initiative Successful tour by Cuban women

Two members of the Federation of Cuban Women (FCW) left Sydney on their return flight to Havana on Friday July 20 after a successful 15-day tour. Isabel Jomarron, President of the FCW in Santiago Province and General-Secretary of the Cuban Communist Party in Santiago city, and Hilda Vasallo, a member of the International Department of the FCW in Havana, were in Australia at the invitation of NSW Labor Women.

This was a significant first for Labor Women — the first official ALP-sponsored tour by a high-level Cuban delegation. It marks an important new link between the Cuban and Australian labour movements.

Val Edwards

Member North Auburn (NSW) Branch, NSW Labor Women's Committee and Printing and Kindred Industries Union

Their trip to Sydney was made difficult by the U.S. blockade which meant they had to fly via Moscow and Tokyo. But when they arrived they were made to feel welcome by about 220 people who attended a reception dinner in Sydney. Labor Women President Kate Butler introduced Jomarron and Vasallo and spoke warmly of her own experiences in Cuba. Those at the dinner included the executive members of Labor Women, officials of the Administrative and Clerical Officers Association, the Printing and Kindred Industries Union and the Plumbers and Gasfitters Union and State parliamentarians Maurie Keane and Laurie Ferguson.

Members of solidarity organisations — Chile Solidarity, Committee in Solidarity with Central America and the Caribbean, Campaign Against Repression in the Pacific and Asia and representatives of the African National Congress — were introduced to the Cubans. They also met students from the Aboriginal college Tranby and diplomats from the USSR, Bulgaria, Roumania and Czechoslovakia.

Jomarron gave a rousing speech to the Sydney dinner. She also spoke passionately about her homeland to supporters of the Cuban Revolution in Wollongong, Canberra, Brisbane and Melbourne. On each occasion she outlined some of the major gains of the past 25 years and explained the difficulties Cubans have faced as a result of the fact that their country is just 90 miles from the most powerful imperialist power in the world. On the subject of the role of

women in the Revolution she told her audiences:

"After the triumph of the Revolution one of the first tasks the FCW concentrated on was to work for the literacy campaign among women. Today we can say that our fight now, in the next five years, is to eliminate any remaining illiteracy among women and for all women to achieve at least ninth grade education. This is our biggest fight.

"Today Cuban women enjoy the same rights as men. There is no job that women can't do, that is reserved only for men. When women and men are both able to do the job a person will be chosen only for their qualifications. That means

In Wollongong, the Cubans met with women from the Jobs for Women Campaign who are taking BHP to court over its discriminatory hiring practices. Jomarron told them that any factory manager in Cuba found guilty of such practices would be expelled by the factory committee.

Jomarron and Vasallo lunched with women parliamentarians in Sydney, Canberra and Brisbane. They had dinner with the executive of the Trades and Labor Council in Brisbane and with the President of the Building Workers Industrial Union in Canberra. In Sydney they were treated to a civic reception in Town Hall and had afternoon tea with Premier Wran. In Melbourne they stayed with Federal parliamentarian Peter Milton who visited Cuba earlier in the year.

They addressed a workshop of about 150 at the Women and Labor Conference in Brisbane.

A highlight of the trip for the women was their attendance at the ALP



Jomarron (left) and Vasallo (centre) at the civic reception in Sydney

that discrimination against women doesn't exist at all.

All of you know that Cuba is a country that has no unemployment, and women have played an active part in production. Before the triumph of the Revolution even professionally qualified women couldn't get a job. They had to do domestic work on very low pay.

"Today women make up a large percentage of doctors and scientists, and have an important role in education and health of our people, in the services, public administration, the state, and People's Power. Twenty-nine women participate in and belong to the Central Committee of the Cuban Communist Party.

"I could talk a lot more about the women in Cuba, but I want to sum up by saying that there has not been any task of the Revolution where women haven't played a large and important role."

National Conference where they observed almost every session, together with Cuban Consul Eliseo Zamora. They were surprised by the importance the Government leaders place on the U.S. alliance. This made it clear to them why the Labor Government has not granted Cuba ambassadorial status in Australia.

While the Conference was on they met many of the ALP members and unionists who were delegates and established links they hope will continue.

Jomarron and Vasallo considered their tour a great success and expressed a deep gratitude for the invitation from NSW Labor Women. It is to be hoped that this visit will be the first of many such interchanges. Plans are already afoot to organise an Australian parliamentary delegation to Cuba and for NSW Labor Women to send representatives to the 1985 National Congress of the Federation of Cuban Women.