

FRONT LINE

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Women in the Metal Trades

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Cover photo: Women turning the heads of 9mm cartridge cases on an automatic lathe at the Commonwealth Ammunition Factory, Footscray (Vic), during the second world war.
(Photo courtesy of Department of Supply)

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SURVEY

The Economy

Tom O'Lincoln writes . . .

The inglorious end of the Fraser government's economic strategy was heralded by an article in *Melbourne Age* printed in mid-November. The article was by Kenneth Davidson, the economics editor, and concerned a top-level meeting of Ministers which discussed economic strategy.

"It emerged at the meeting," wrote Davidson, "That a majority of the Cabinet — including the Prime Minister — are soft on devaluation." Only Lynch and Senator Cotton opposed devaluation." However Lynch brought in the Governor of the Reserve Bank, who bludgeoned Fraser into changing his mind.

The picture was of a government that had lost its nerve. Fraser was becoming more and more aware that his economic strategy wasn't working. He had to deny the Age story in Parliament to quiet critics. But three weeks later, he dramatically confirmed Davidson's claims.

The devaluation means abandoning his whole economic approach, the very platform on which the government was elected.

Fraser was brought to power to certain things:

- 1 To discipline the working class, which Labor was thought unable to do
- 2 To reduce wages.
- 3 To reduce inflation. If these three tasks could be accomplished it would restore business confidence and raise profits. That should lead to increased investment, and recovery would follow. So the theory went.

The government never tired of repeating that the first task was to beat inflation. Until inflation was stopped (at workers' expense, of course), there could be no healthy recovery.

Yet in pursuit of these aims, Fraser has done no better for the

ruling class than Labor would have done.

STRIKES

The recession, which began in late 1974, had already begun to reduce the rate of strikes by early 1975. The rate of strikes has continued to decline under Fraser, but more slowly. These figures give the general picture:

Days lost in strikes	
Sept. 1973 to Aug. 1974:	6,325,000
Sept. 1974 to Aug. 1975	3,465,000
Sept. 1975 to Aug. 1976	2,359,000

N.B.: the last figure does not include Medibank strikes.

Obviously the trend toward reduction of strikes has not strengthened under the new government. And if the Medibank strikes are counted, you end with 4,032,000 days lost for the last year — an increase over the previous year.

Apart from the recession, the other cause of the reduction in strikes is undoubtedly wage indexation — a creation of the Labor government.

WAGES

Real Wages have been reduced since the recession began. But if the "Econometer" section of the *National Times* is to be believed, this is mostly the result of the wage indexation

scheme introduced under Labor. Econometer points out that the wage-indexation system is structured to reduce wages — something that Marxists have pointed out from the start.

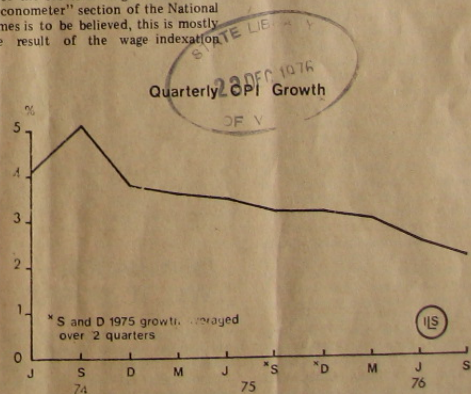
Fraser would have done well to leave the system alone.

Instead he attacked wage-indexation, by demanding less than full indexation. According to Econometer this has only resulted in a tiny extra reduction of real wages — a total of 0.7 percent so far. That is peanuts, but it does have the effect of discrediting wage-indexation in the eyes of the workers. The ACTU is less able to keep selling it to the rank and file.

INFLATION

Inflation has been slowing down. However, that is none of Fraser's doing. It is the product of the recession, which began under Labor.

The graph shows clearly that the sharpest drop in inflation came in the last months of 1974. The rate of inflation then continued to decline gradually, with some fluctuation. The decline in inflation under Labor has not been greater than under Labor. We have simply seen the continuation of a process that was well under way when the Liberals came to power.



BUSINESS CONFIDENCE

Fraser was supposed to restore business confidence. The employers were indeed elated by his victory, but their elation has faded in the face of the government's weak economic performance.

The movements of share prices tell the story eloquently:

Share prices rose by about 20% or so in the first six months of the new government. But since the budget, they have fallen to a level lower than they were when the Liberals came into power.

Investment has not risen steadily. Following the same pattern as the share market, new capital expenditure rose in the first six months of this year, only to slump in the following months. Some industries continued to cut back production — the latest shock being the decision by AIS to cut back its work force by 1000 on the South Coast.

THE MINI CREDIT-SQUEEZE

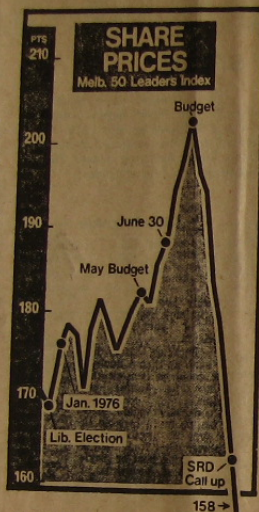
The credit squeeze announced on November 10 was the first sign that the government was nearing a crisis. And Davidson's article in the Age the next day showed that a debate was developing in the government over economic strategy.

The Treasury, true to form, was for staying on the original course.

But the government was coming under increasing pressure to change course, as this showed no sign of working. Powerful sections of business wanted to reflate the economy. A devaluation was one way to do it.

The first time around, Lynch held the line. In fact, he imposed a mild credit squeeze. This was blow to business confidence, since it made it harder to get money for investment. But he believed he had no choice.

The government had made substantial hand-outs to business early in the year. It had deferred the payment of company taxes. But instead of investing the extra money,



THIS GRAPH OF THE 50 leading shares index shows the full effect of the Lynch bear market, starting just after the August budget and plummeting since the new credit clampdown was announced on Sunday.

the employers used it for speculation. This was likely to fuel inflation. Much of it was being used to speculate against the dollar, increasing pressures for devaluation. To mop up this loose money, Lynch tightened credit.

But once Davidson spilled the beans, and everyone could see that the government was wavering, pressures grew still stronger for devaluation. Finally, Fraser capitulated.

DEVALUATION — WILL IT WORK?

All other things being equal, devaluation would stimulate an economic recovery. Australian exports will be cheaper overseas, which should encourage all export

industries to expand. Imports will be dearer, which should make domestic products more competitive. Domestic producers, therefore, should also be encouraged to expand. Profits should rise, and then be re-invested to finance more expansion.

Expansion should produce more jobs; the newly employed should be able to purchase more products... and round it goes. Or at least that is how it goes in the textbooks.

But all other things are not equal. There are many reasons why the present devaluation, under present conditions, may not benefit most of industry much at all. And some areas will suffer badly.

One area that will suffer is the import trade. That sector alone, however, would not be decisive. But now let's look at other areas.

To take one extreme, the building industry will gain nothing. Obviously it neither exports its product, nor does it face competition from imports. At the other end of the scale, the meat industry should normally benefit enormously, since it is an export industry. But meat quotas imposed in the USA will limit the amount it can export.

Meanwhile, all of industry will be faced with higher costs — because devaluation will lead to a much higher inflation rate in Australia.

HOW CAN THE GOVERNMENT REIN IN INFLATION?

The government has two alternative means available to lessen this increase in inflation, and to help out manufacturers. One is to lower tariffs. That would lessen the rise in prices of imported raw materials and components, which would help many manufacturers.

But the industries which are protected by those same tariffs will scream. Their screams ought to be ignored, since they benefit from devaluation more than most people, but Fraser is very attached to tariff protection. He will probably resist cutting tariffs.

The second means to lessen inflation is a credit squeeze, a tougher one than before. Lynch will favour that. But if industries like the building industry are faced simultaneously with a credit squeeze and a 17 percent rise in costs, they will be sunk. And many small businesses will be caught in the same squeeze.

Of course there is also the possibility of smashing the unions, and making workers pay the whole price. Newspapers are commenting that this is the one area where the government looks like taking a firm position!

Meanwhile, one group of capitalists seem set to make a mint out of devaluation: the mineral interests. But then we always knew who Fraser's friends were, didn't we?

SUMMARY AND PROSPECTS

The Fraser government is in serious trouble. By November it was clear that it was unable to do a better job for the ruling class than Labor had done, and was perhaps even doing worse. It had proved unable to decisively defeat the unions, or to produce business confidence. The devaluation was a desperate act by the government to restore its position. But it means abandoning its whole previous strategy. Fraser's credibility is now very low.

It is possible that the ruling class itself will get rid of the present Prime Minister in the coming months.

More dangers lurk ahead. The devaluation will send inflation through the ceiling, but may not produce any recovery — or only a short and shallow one.

Meanwhile, the recovery overseas is weak, and may collapse. If a new world recession develops before Australia begins to recover, the Australian economy would be plunged into a much worse slump.

Industrial Scene

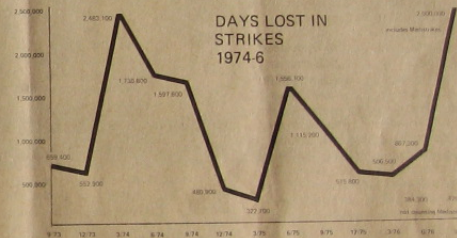
Clobber Fraser, or He'll Clobber Us! So read an IS banner during the Constitutional Crisis. Since then we have seen stormy

battles. It is true that most have ended in defeat, which was to be expected given right wing leadership and the high level of unemployment.

But the Australian workers, though beaten, remain unbowed. The past year has demonstrated an amazing resiliency on their part. The unions have not been decisively clobbered.

THE RECESSION HAS LOWERED THE LEVEL OF STRIKE ACTION

Here is a graph, showing the ups and downs of the industrial struggle over two years.



THE QUALITY OF STRIKES IS HIGH

What must really worry the government is the quality of the strikes. The Medibank issue produced a national strike movement around a political issue that is unprecedented in recent times. Where opportunities were given to the rank and file to have their say, as in Melbourne and Wollongong, delegates showed a tremendous understanding of the issues and a militancy to match.

The Newport dispute in Victoria is in some ways more impressive. It represents the culmination of a dogged struggle over years by militant workers, in the face of intimidation by the State government, and despite frantic efforts to sell out by bureaucrats from the rightwing to the "Communist" left.

The economic struggles of recent months have been impressive too. The Fairfax strike in Sydney has surprised the employers, unions and the strikers themselves. Nobody expected the workers to hold out for weeks on end, yet they have done so and their morale

SURVEY

is high. They have produced a high level of organisation, notably in the work done to gain support throughout the union movement.

In Newcastle, dockyards workers have remained unmoved by campaigns of intimidation from Canberra and sly manoeuvres by Wran. At Sydney's Qantas building site, the workers are solid after three months on strike.

The struggles appear fragmented. During the Medibank campaign, Melbourne and Wollongong remained ghettos of militancy while other centres did little. Now we find that the Newport battle has received little attention outside Victoria. Sydney seems dominated by economic struggles.

But a thread runs through all the disputes. The militants in each of them share an awareness of the reactionary intentions of the Liberal governments, of the seriousness of the recession, of the way that individual employers and the various governments are tied together into a single ruling class.

This politicisation of the working class is a national phenomenon. It is possible that the emerging crisis of the Fraser government, together with its obvious union-bashing intentions, may give next year's struggles a national character.

THE END IS NIGH FOR WAGE INDEXATION

The Consumer Price Index for the present quarter will probably show about a 5% rise in prices. That is largely because of changes in Medibank. The courts will be under huge pressures from Fraser to grant much less. If they do what Fraser wants, it will probably force the unions to withdraw from the system.

If they don't, the following quarter will bring another blockbuster. Devaluation will have had an effect by then bringing another jump in the CPI. It is hard to imagine indexation surviving two such big increases.

Meanwhile, devaluation will mean higher profits in some industries. The higher employers will be scrambling to cash in, and will pay wage rises rather than allow stoppages to halt production. The unions in these industries would be foolish not to return to direct collective bargaining, and abandon wage indexation.

As for other unions, the higher inflation which devaluation will bring

will make a wages push essential.

Socialists should be demanding that the unions withdraw immediately from wage indexation, and prepare for an immediate wage offensive.

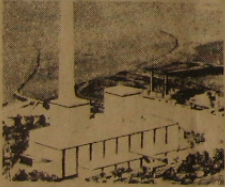
CAN THE GOVERNMENT BE BROUGHT DOWN?

Last year, I, S. did not generally raise the call for bringing down the Fraser government. We rightly saw it as a diversion from the main issue, which was to build a strike movement over Medibank. We felt that Fraser enjoyed the united support of the ruling class, and that concept of actually bringing him down appeared utopian even to most militants.

But the government's position is now drastically weakened. Its economic strategy has failed. It is split, and the split extends into the ranks of the ruling class. Workers will feel much more confident in disputing conservative economic arguments.

Moreover, the past year has shown that the unions can bounce back over and over from defeats — that the government cannot decisively defeat the working class. This will be understood by militants throughout industry. The prospect of defeating Fraser by a long war of attrition will look much brighter.

Without engaging in ultra-left stupidities, our publications can begin to raise the prospect of destroying this government in 1977.



Newport

Phil Griffiths writes

THE flashpoint has passed for the moment in the struggle to stop the building of the Newport Power Station. The Union Bans are still in force, the Vital Status Project Bill has

been passed and only awaits proclamation, but as yet there is no move by the Government to force the issue and provoke a massive confrontation.

Meanwhile all the forces for peace at any price are working overtime. It is a suitable moment to review the situation.

The site of the proposed Newport Power Station is a patch of swampy industrial land just 5 kilometres from the heart of downtown Melbourne. It is right on the edge of the Western Suburbs, home to 400,000 working class people and a large chunk of Melbourne's secondary industry. To build a power station there would be a serious assault on the health of the residents.

But that would be nothing new. The existing coal-fired power station of Newport is a dangerous, fuming construction, often spreading thick smoke over nearby Williamstown. Because the Western suburbs are so solidly industrial and so solidly working class, they boast a record of neglect and deprivation that would not be tolerated anywhere else.

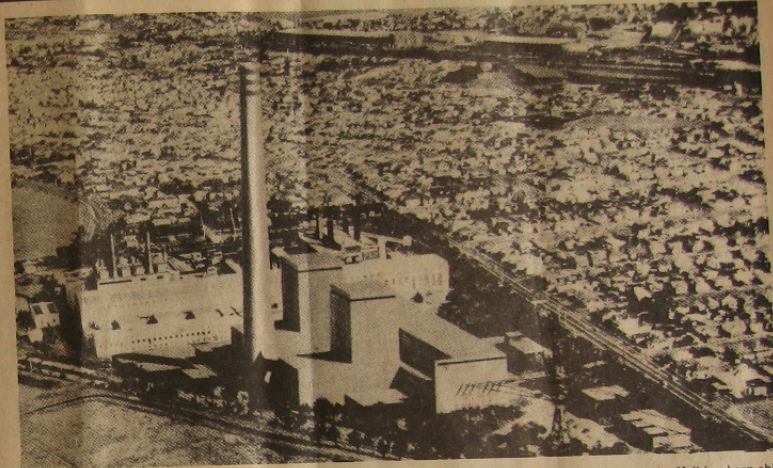
The original struggle against the power station was organised by local residents concerned about the effect it would have on the quality of the air and water in the district. By November 1972, they had managed to convince the Building and Construction Workers Federation (BLF) to place a black-ban on further work until the project was cleared by an independent inquiry.

The Victorian State Labor Party tagged behind, and finally, the Hamer Government, anxious to promote its new, trendy, co-operative image, agreed to a public hearing by the Environmental Protection Authority.

The EPA granted the SEC its licence. The hearing was a set-up from start to finish. The EPA could only consider the application in regard to the Newport site, there was no hearing on the question of alternative sites they could only examine the pollution aspect and without any agreed standards, there was a great deal of behind-the-scenes pressure from the government and shortly afterwards, the head of the EPA resigned.

The EPA licence contained a series of conditions, including one that that would close down the station every sixth day if strictly implemented.

After conservation groups had forced an appeal hearing against the decision, the government once again



organised a "safety" committee of business and government authority stooges. In upholding the EPA decision, the three committee members set their own standards for pollution levels at roughly twice the level used elsewhere. None of the three were scientists.

Then the Trade Union movement stepped in in force and the Newport project was black banned by the Trades Hall Council. All work on the site stopped.

Apart from ritual denunciations by Hamer, there was little movement over Newport. The SEC continued to assume it was going ahead and let out contracts for equipment and the Trade Union movement maintained its bans, but at the same time refusing to resolve the issue once and for all. Alternative sites were proposed, but in the turmoil of 1975, the issue was lost.

But with the deepening recession and Fraser in Government in Canberra, the time seemed ripe to get rid of the ban.

In April, some frantic scenes manoeuvring saw the Trades Hall Executive offer Hamer a way out, a compromise. The capacity of Newport would be only "half" the original level. As "The Batter" commented on 28 April, this presumably means cancer in-one lung

only!

It was during this period that the present battle lines were drawn up. Using his position as Secretary of the Trades Hall Council, Ken Stone used every device possible to get the THC bans lifted.

WEAKENED

He used the weakened industrial position of the builders labourers, a position caused by the recession and Gallagher's alliance with the bosses in smashing the NSW leadership. He used all the SEC's cynical arguments. Newport was safe, it had been passed by the EPA. Newport would allow industry the power it needed to expand and provide jobs (despite the fact that industry is contracting and cutting jobs). Newport would cost hundreds of millions of dollars, which would be passed onto the consumer through higher electricity bills. The Trade Unions want to beresponsible citizens and not raving ideologues obstructing progress.

But Ken Stone was not alone. He had some interesting allies in the Communist Party. From as far back as April, Communist Party union officials have been pressing for compromise on Newport. And for just as long, the

of the left in Trades Hall has been able to win a majority for maintaining the bans. Tribune has repeatedly called for a "tactical reappraisal" of the situation, yet the left has kept winning. What is there to re-appraise?

During the concurrent ALP State Conference, the party's shadow minister for conservation turned around and got his committee to reverse its position to the support for Ken Stone's compromise. The conference then rubber-stamped this well-organised betrayal by the Labor machine.

Inside the Trades Hall, a large number of the rebel unions, led by the ETU and the Plumbers and Gasfitters organised to keep the bans on any work on any new power station at Newport.

When it finally came to the vote in Trades Hall, the left position won and both Stone and Halpenny (from the CPA) were humiliated.

The Labor Party got around to the again reversing its position to fall in line with the unions.

The Government kept the pressure up. Electricity tariffs were jumped around 20% and Newport was blamed. Increasing unemployment and a barrage of support in the press was wearing down support for the union position.

Ken Stone, blatantly abusing his position as THC Secretary, moved once again. More "informal meetings" of union officials were called to "reconsider" the bans. A proposal was put to the Trades Hall that it reconsider its position and renegotiate with the Government on the question of the Newport station. Two amendments were moved.

One, from the Electrical Trades, called for negotiations but ruled out completely any consideration of Newport as the site for the power station. The second amendment, moved by John Halpenny from the AMWU and a leading member of the Communist Party, called for negotiations on the site of the station, but did not specifically exclude Newport. The intent was clear.

VOTING

In the voting, which took place over two weeks because of a tied vote and a controversial ruling from the chair, the ETU amendment was carried by 4 votes with every delegate attending for the first time in history. The Communist Party voted for the ETU amendment while undermining it with its own compromise proposals.

During all this, the State Labor Party tried once again to influence the outcome. The Parliamentary caucus voted to support Ken Stone's call for negotiations and reconsideration.

Needless to say, with Hamer's threats of union bashing Legislation recently announced, the subsequent state conference (heavily attended by union officials) voted unanimously to correct this attempted sabotage. Once again the utter irrelevance of the ALP was underlined and once again the parliamentarians were humiliated in their pathetic attempts to compromise and sell out.

Hamer went beserk. Having negotiated several "agreements" with a highly wide-ranging and severe union-bashing legislation in memory. It was so primitive, that the Government itself had to amend it in the Upper House. Nevertheless, it still prescribes penalties of \$50,000 for organisations boycotting projects named as "Vital".

This nearderthal act immediately, if temporarily, united the Trade Union movement. There was a lot of rhetoric flowing about how we might have disagreed on Newport, but this is different.

But there was no action to match

the rhetoric. And neither could there have been because the VSP Bill and Newport are inextricably linked. Hamer, or at least the Bolte-line conservatives in his Cabinet, would like this legislation anyway. Newport has given them the cover to introduce it. Hamer wants Newport built. He is prepared to use this as a stick to beat the unions.

In the end, the only way to smash the VSP Bill is to deliver a decisive defeat on the Government over Newport. If the Newport ban stays, the Bill will exist in name only. The unions will feel in a position to smash it, and any threatened application of it, will.



John Halpenny

The relationship between Newport and the VSP Bill means that unless there is an immediate threat to some specific official, the unions will remain divided over the VSP Bill as well. Stone regards it as another weapon in arguing for Newport. The left unions are avoiding calling a shop stewards rally because they fear that the stewards would vote for the building of Newport under the Government's conditions. Not only that, but there are elections in the AMWU and there are a lot of worried CPA officials at the moment. Unfortunately, this ignores the impact a show of strength would have on the Government and incorrectly suggests that leading stewards are overall against the union bans. They're not. If they were, the unions would have heard about it by now.

In the meantime, the THC has taken up the call for an inquiry into the site of the power station. An amendment that called for no inquiry that allowed discussion of Newport as

a possible site was defeated, meaning that the THC is calling for an inquiry that might still decide to build Newport.

Just where that leaves Trades Hall policy is unclear. Once again, the Communist Party and the AMWU officials played a key role in defeating the amendment, moved at Trades Hall by Furnishing Trades Secretary Ken Carr.

In fact, when it came to discussing the issue late, Carr was attacked for "breaking the unity" of the left caucus in Trades Hall. Apparently, the left caucus had voted to support the inquiry call and a similar amendment had been beaten in caucus.

But on Newport, talk of left unity is utopian, and in fact dangerous. The left is split and no amount of compromising and chest beating will change that, for the moment. One group in the left unions is pushing very hard the line of compromise, at the same time as maintaining a paper opposition to Newport. These unions are holding back the other half of the left that seems more prepared to actually fight. The task is to unite these unions around the existing bans and further action. That kind of unity would be of some value.

This split in the Rebel Unions is more complicated than the voting of their leaders. There has been a significant wave of disgust amongst members of the rebel unions and especially the AMWU, at the line the AMWU officials have been pushing. There is also a huge split inside the Communist Party, with some members voting against Halpenny on the floor of Trades Hall and in other union meetings. Certainly, there is a thinly-disguised hostility to the policies of the Victorian branch amongst CPA members in other states.

NEEDED

What's needed now is for unions who have remained consistently militant on this issue to assert their independent position on Newport, to commonly declare that their bans will stay, inquiry or no inquiry, because talk will not make Newport safe.

The current situation also highlights the reactions of some of our most important leaders when confronting the powers that be. The Rebel Unions and the industrial/political machine around John Halpenny of the AMWU are two of the most

important formations in Victorian politics.

Since November last year, there have been three great struggles in Victoria against the Governments. The first was the Constitutional Crisis, and the attempt by workers in Victoria to organise for a General Strike. The Battler and the Age have already documented the role of the Communist Party in containing that upsurge.

The second was the struggle over Medibank, when once again, Communist Party officials used their machine in the unions to hold back the struggle in order to achieve some mythical unity with the right. On that occasion, the rank and file ignored them and the CP was forced to move sharply to the left for fear of losing their base. It is significant that Hawke had to call a General strike to quell the upsurge over Medibank and he needed the co-operation of the left unions (who refused to call rallies on the strike day) to defuse the situation.

WANTING

Newport is the third great struggle and it could be Waterloo, or perhaps more accurately, FORD, for John Halpenny.

It was Laurie Carmichael's role in selling out the Ford struggle in 1975 that shattered his militant image. He was quickly shoved upstairs into national AMWU office. Halpenny was then furiously promoted as his successor. But how long can he hold on now?

Three times out of three in the past year, the Communist Party have been tested and found wanting. Rank and file militants will not be prepared to endure that kind of performance for much longer. The only way, however, that they will get any kind of defence against the Liberal Governments and the effects of the recession is by organising themselves to act independently of the timid left.

Building that kind of rank and file, grass roots organisation is one of the tasks of the I.S.

WOMEN IN THE METAL TRADES

by Janey Stone

“TO DEVELOP Trade Union consciousness among women can be difficult, but not as difficult as it may first appear. . . the employment of a large number of women in our industry is a relatively new development in this country.”

JOE GOSS, a South Australian official of the Amalgamated Engineering Union and later of the Amalgamated Metal Workers' Union, wrote these words about 1969 or 1970. He was a very experienced trade unionist who came to Australia in the early 1930's, yet he appears to know little about the real history of women in the metal trades and the relevant unions. Perhaps this article can contribute to greater knowledge and understanding for trade unionists.

WOMEN ENTER THE METAL TRADES — EARLY 20th CENTURY

Women have always provided a lot of factory labour. In fact in 1927, about half of all factory workers in Australia were women, and in Victoria they were 65%. In the early part of the century, women were concentrated in the traditional areas — clothing, textiles, shoes, food preserving; but already in the 1920's they were beginning to move into metal and engineering.

Here they were employed on "light repetitive work" such as core-making, nut and bolt making, and drilling, lapping and assembling.

Right from the beginning the craft unions resisted the introduction of women. The Amalgamated Engineering Union, for instance:

"During the last war (in Britain) when women entered the metal trades in large numbers... engineers were inclined to regard the situation as abnormal and transitory, whilst the prevailing low rates of women's work did not conduce to their acceptance as fellow Unionists."

This appears at first glance to be outright sexism. One would almost think that the union believed that women deliberately asked for low wages in order to avoid having to unionise!

But I will try to show that such statements and attitudes aren't simple sex prejudice, the response of sensitive male egos. Mostly the male unionists' reactions to the introduction of female labour were also tied up with genuine traditional union principles. Often these principles were the narrow views of craft unionism. Sometimes the unions' attitude was conditioned by their limited aims in a social crisis they didn't understand — as in the depression.

On the other hand, when unions appeared to be taking a principled stand for women, it was often for ulterior motives. For instance, during the 30's the Australian metal unions became advocates of equal pay. The main reason was that they were trying to protect their (male) members' existing jobs, and believed that the main reason employers hired women was because they were cheaper.

The inter-weaving of traditional union principles and attitudes with sexism is a pattern that can be followed right through the history of women in the metal trades.

Here is an early case. In 1925, H.V. McKay (predecessor of Massey Ferguson) in Sunshine, Vic. employed girls on what had been boys' work. The men in other sections threatened to strike, and negotiations between unions and employers dragged on for two years. The employers agreed to equal pay, yet the unions (AEU and Agricultural Implement Workers) continue to object. Eventually the women were accepted following the recommendations of an all-union committee representing both sides.

At first glance this would appear to be a simple case of sexism — the men just didn't want women on the job. But an account by the factory superintendent reveals clearly what the important issues were:

"On one occasion when the boys who were employed left in a body over some trivial matter, I gained the consent of the directors to experiment with girls on the machine. The result was apparent almost at once. We got an increase of 62% in output within the first few days of operating the machines and the girls adapted themselves to the conditions immediately."

The investigating committee made some wage comparison:

	15yrs	18yrs	21plus
MALE RATE	25/-	44/-	91/9
Average female earnings for full week of 48 hours on piece work.	33/9	56/9	98/11

What are the issues here? The boys were clearly on strike and the girls were scabbing. The girls knew nothing about the established pace of work and accepted speed-up — production was 62% higher, but piecework didn't bring 62% higher wages.

And most importantly, the management had taken the opportunity to introduce piecework, which has always (rightly) been resisted by unions in the metal industry.

No wonder the men resisted the introduction of women, and nominal equal pay wasn't enough to buy them off.

In the events at McKays, the girls themselves appear to have been completely passive, pawns in the hands of the unions and the company. But that wasn't always the case. Sometimes women stood up and fought for themselves. When that happened prejudice was often discarded, and the men followed their lead.

In 1924, women workers at Metal Manufacturers, Port Kembla, went out on strike. The company had tried to speed up production, making them work 5 or 6 spindles instead of the usual 4, without any increase in their pay — which was about half the men's.

"This eventually raised a protest from the girls, and a refusal to work more than the original four spindles. The dismissing of one of the girls who refused to work the extra long spindles brought about an immediate stoppage, all the girls leaving the works with the girl dismissed."

The men in the rest of the factory struck in sympathy.

THE SECOND WORLD WAR

Women continued to gradually move into the metal trades during the 30's, but the main influx came during the war. Between 1930 and 1941, 94,000 women moved into

the workforce⁶ the majority of them going into metal and munitions. Women in the metal, machinery and vehicle industry rose from 1375 in 1933 to 52,847 in 1943⁷ and by 1945 they were 13% of all workers in the industry⁸.

Of course the main reason was the massive increase in demand for war equipment and munitions, coupled with the large numbers of men leaving industry to go into the armed forces. But the movement of women into industry was also associated with other changes.

The war period was one of restructuring and rationalisation of industry. New technology, increased need for precision and greater specialization meant big changes in factories. Conveyor belt flow systems became much more common, and there was marked increase in numbers of semi-skilled metal workers.

These changes were, from the employers' point of view, suited to employment of women. And they were eminently suited to the introduction of piecework in many areas.

Piecework was made possible by a regulation covering the Women's Employment Board. Set up in 1942, the WEB was intended to set wages for women doing work which had previously been done by men, or which was new work. It had to set wages on the basis of

"the efficiency of females in the performance of the work and any other special factors which may be likely to affect the productivity of their work in relation to that of males."

The words "efficiency" and "productivity" opened the door to piece work.

The employers, led by the Metal Trades Employer's Association, fought hard against the board and its decisions. They took out a writ against it in the High Court, used delaying tactics at its hearings, and frequently just refused to pay the higher wages.

In the metal trades, the WEB mostly awarded women 90% of the male wage after a probationary period on a lower wage. The employers did everything they could to get the WEB to decide on less. (When there was disagreement on the board, usually the employers' representatives wanted to pay less and the trade unionists more.¹⁰)

They argued that women needed more supervision, and had lower productivity due to lesser strength and greater absenteeism. Jobs were changed so that women weren't quite doing the full work of men. In other cases the job was broken down, so that it entailed less responsibility. While greatly desiring the female labour, the

Two women employed in the munitions works, Footscray, (Vic) during the Second World War



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employers had to constantly downgrade it. This same uneasy mixture is shown in the WEB statements:

*"We draw attention to the position that if females claim equality of pay with males, they must be prepared to accept equality in other matters as well, and for the most part women accept this position."*¹¹

Yet the women concerned in this application were then given only 80% of the male rate. And here is a second case:

*"The evidence is that the woman has done practically the whole of the work of an oiler and grasser and has been prevented from doing the full amount of work by reason of some restrictions that the employers think fit to impose upon her, possibly out of regard for a feeling that she might not be capable of climbing a high ladder. She says she is able to do it and we have no doubt she is capable of doing it. We think she should not be prevented from earning the full award rate."*¹² She was awarded 90%.

Although the WEB rarely awarded 100% of the male rate, there is plenty of evidence that women were often actually of greater value to the employers. For instance Judge Foster, chairman of the WEB, commented that

"In some cases, particularly on monotonous labour, women managers have said that the woman works better. Women managers were invariably better "where the job required unlimited patience, light touch, dexterity and thoroughness."

This was of course explained away as women's nature. An article released by the US Office of War Information almost satirizes (unintentionally) the exploitation of women's "natural" abilities:

"At the Lockheed-Vega aircraft factories on the West Coast of the US, women are working side by side with the men... A department foreman declared, "In every task in which there are no physical factors — such as weighty parts to move — women are as good as men,"

"Physical factors are often decisive however. Centuries of sewing and needlework have given women a natural finger dexterity and a phenomenal resistance to monotonous repetition which stand them in good stead now. At the exact techniques requires both precision and speed, their fine touch and keen eyesight are invaluable."

"These same facilities have given women exceptional advantages over men in such factory jobs as cutting and soldering of wires, assembling motors etc."

"Mass production has subdivided many of the phases of aircraft work into small repetitive operations, and at these women have another natural advantage. Patience, which is proverbially a women's virtue, fits them for monotonous small work which leaves men workers exhausted from sheer boredom. Women can continue a single small operation hour after hour without losing their efficiency or their interest."

*"This same natural advantage of women, incidentally, often reacts as an advantage for men workers. When replaced by women in the monotonous jobs along the production line, men can go on to the departments offering heavier and more varied tasks. In this way, women have accelerated production, and have brought about an upgrading of men workers that would not otherwise have been possible."*¹³

Now let's take a closer look at a couple of the metal unions during this period. The Amalgamated Engineering Union and the Sheet Metal Workers' Union provide an interesting comparison.



Women in British Industry, World War I

THE AEU

The Australian AEU was a branch of the British union until 1968. It is an old union with well established traditions. Engineers were always very craft-conscious, proud of their skills and standards of work.

The AEU was an elite among metal unions, wealthy, and before World War II provided many non-industrial benefits such as insurance against loss of tools, accidents, sickness and unemployment. *"To the tendency to create an aristocracy of labour was added, therefore, the fastidiousness of an insurance company."*¹⁴ AEU members were nicknamed "Gentlemen Jims" and "Tin Gods".

Unskilled worker members gradually grew in numbers throughout the 20th Century, but remained a minority. T. Sheridan, the historian of the AEU, says *"there is no doubt that the AEU remained predominantly a craft union right to the end of its separate existence in 1972."*

The AEU's attitude to women in the industry and women members once they were admitted was conditioned by its own limited craft union approach, and its basic outlook which remained unchanged throughout the last 50 years of its existence in Australia. Sheridan explains:

"As with all other unions, the AEU's raison d'être was to guard and improve its members' conditions of work. Within the policy structure erected on that premise the major influence was the fear of unemployment."

Their long experience of the craft trade cycle naturally made them hesitate for a considerable period before finally accepting that the 1940's had ushered in a new era of full employment. Most engineers' doubts disappeared only in the late 1950's and their long conditioning has continued to call forth most of the old automatic reflexes into the seventies.¹⁵

I would add that one of the "old automatic reflexes" is opposition to women. In other words, opposition to women wasn't pure sexism, but was usually tied up with the basic policies of the union.

During World War I, the AEU in Britain had experienced a lot of trouble with a rapid influx of engineers who hadn't had the long training usually necessary to do tradesmen's work. In World War II, the AEU was determined to have more control over these "dilutees". It negotiated with the government very early on and an agreement allowing (male) dilution was reached in 1940. The AEU's policy in the early 1940's was

"designed for the immediate and future safeguarding of

*its own membership, whose economic interests constitute the primary concern of the organisation. Second preference in employment was to be given to men disemployed through war conditions, and thirdly the employment of women was approved provided that they be paid the male rate for the job. If and when normal conditions return it was assumed that the reverse order would prevail in discharges from the industry in line with the time-honoured practice of last on first off, taking it for granted that this represented a natural order of priority in industrial status."*¹⁷

If you make sure that women are last on, you can rely on union tradition to make sure they're first off.

The increasing numbers of women in the industry in the early 40's created a terrible dilemma for the union. They were opposed to women being there, but a union must face facts. They couldn't be admitted to the union, but the existence of a lot of unorganized workers weakens the union's position. The union couldn't negotiate for them, but in order to protect their members' own wages they had to ensure equal pay.

So while the union officials were negotiating with the government, there were many stoppages on the shop floor over equal pay. And from 1940, there was mounting pressure from the rank and file up through the union structure to change the rules and admit women.¹⁸

For instance engineers at Fords, Homebush (in Sydney) struck for three weeks in late 1942 over women employed on first class welding, and there was a similar dispute at ACI Engineering in Sydney. The strikes provided pressure for the unions' negotiations, and in the end regulations were gazetted in May, 1943 providing for equal pay on tradesmen's or second class machinists' pay, and male journeymen were given preference over women. The pay question being settled (from the men's point of view), the AEU became thereafter less concerned with the problem of female wages.

The struggle in the union to admit women is a classic story of rank and file pressure on conservative officials. Resistance to women existed on the shop floor, of course, especially among tradesmen. The AEU fought hard to prevent women being employed even as second or third class machinists, while the toolroom was "a strictly male preserve".

Yet on the shop floor resistance was a matter of emotional reaction, not principle as it seems to have been among the officials. And there were many pressures pushing the men to accept women.

The resistance to dilution meant that the AEU members had to fill the extra demand for labour as much as possible themselves, by working very long hours. One Melbourne organiser commented that efforts were made to "supplement the 44 hour week with as much overtime as the human form can stand."¹⁹ The union was unable to take care of its members' interests in this situation, because of its commitment to resisting dilution. Not only couldn't they look after their members' health, they couldn't even use overtime bans as a tactical weapon. For instance, the Commonwealth Council refused in early 1941 to be associated with an FIA overtime ban as part of a campaign against new tax provisions. In the end the government was forced to interpose and limit hours to 56 per week.

This situation, together with the increasing numbers of unorganisable women on the shop floor, meant the ranks exerted pressure for the admission of women. In Britain, for instance, AEU shop stewards helped organise women

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into other unions.²⁰

In Australia by 1940, organizers (who are close to the shop floor) were putting pressure on the Commonwealth Council.²¹ Commonwealth Council's answer was made on principle: under no circumstances would it agree to the entry of women into the skilled trades. By April, 1941 the Commonwealth Council was forced to communicate with the Executive Committee in Britain for permission to organise females "for our own protection".

London refused, but the district officials kept up the pressure in Australia. Eventually an international ballot was taken in July, 1942 but bureaucratic holdups meant women weren't admitted until April, 1943. Once women were admitted, the AEU moved quickly "to unionise women workers in the real sense of the word."²²

Women were quickly joined up and Muriel Heagney, a well known woman trade union activist, was appointed organiser of the women's section. A pamphlet was put out in May, 1943 aimed at helping organize women, and providing them with arguments to use against any hostile male members. Women shop stewards were elected, and their first meeting was held in November, 1943 in Sydney.

THE SHEET METAL WORKERS' UNION²³

The SMWU was in many ways very different from the AEU. Before the Second World War it was much smaller and poorer. It didn't even start producing a printed newsheet until December 1936. The Victorian branch bought its first car and employed its first typist in 1940. The union was small enough for deaths of individual members to be reported in the newsheet. It wasn't until 1938 that sheet metal working was recognised as an apprenticeship trade, after many years of agitation.

There always was a small number of women working in sheet metal, particularly canister-making (for tinned foods), but before the war only some States made any effort to organize them. For instance in 1938, the S.A. branch recruited some women doing enamelling, but the NSW branch doesn't appear to have recruited any before the war, although there were eligible women. This is in spite of the fact that, as a small union trying to grow, they were constantly on the look-out for new members.

As in other sections of the metal industry, the SMWU had to cope with a massive influx of women in the first years of the war. Although the union accepted women in the industry and as members, it was still very much matter of women being all right as long as they knew their place. The 1940 Federal Conference passed a motion "that branches guard against the introduction of female labour do work other than on which they were engaged at the time of the 1930 award being made."

In December, 1941 the question of female labour was "a burning one" in SA "Members must make up their minds as to the conditions under which they are prepared to tolerate this class of labor."

In other words, the union was mainly concerned with the interests of its male members. Like the AEU, it looked to the future of their jobs after the war. It regarded the presence of large numbers of women as temporary. And, also like the AEU, it continued to struggle to keep women out of new areas of the industry. For instance, when firms in SA asked the union to agree to women doing soldering, it refused.

Finally in April, 1942 the union started to make an all out effort to organize women. An article in the newsheet

told the membership:

"It is more necessary than ever that they be recruited to the unions. Already the Ironworkers Union has thousands of female members and the ASE has commenced to organize others.

Shop stewards of the SMWU where female labour is employed, must immediately organize them into our union, where they will receive the protection of our organization and be able to play their part in the struggle to maintain and improve conditions."

The final straw seems to have been the sight of all those potential members going into the Ironworkers and the ASE!

Women shop stewards were appointed. In 1943 two conferences were held and a women's committee elected. Miss Doris Beby became Women's Organizer. And the issue of equal pay became a major one for the unions.

Before the establishment of the WEB, the union actually managed to get full equal pay for women members in munitions factories working on presses, soldering, drilling and assembling. They also managed in several cases to get equal pay for junior females, but were unable to get employers in general to apply it to adult women.

When the WEB started functioning, the SMWU changed its orientation slightly. The General Secretary thought the Women's Employment Act was "the most revolutionary legislation enacted for many years." The SMWU made more applications to the WEB than any other union. When the WEB made a common ruling of 90% in the metal trades, the union concentrated on implementation of it, rather than pushing for the full equal pay. (Of course they continued to talk about the need for full equal pay and made applications.)

The campaign seems to have been quite impressive. Along with court action, the union asserted its belief in shop floor action. "We urge all members to keep up continuous agitation in their shops to secure improved conditions." And there certainly were a lot of industrial disputes and strikes, as we'll see in the next section.

But the SMWU's policy on the war was one of full support, and their continual pushing of the battle for production must have tended to counteract their support for industrial action over equal pay.

The first women's shop stewards meeting in 1943 pledged itself to "avoid stoppages of work, which can only be harmful to the war effort." Shop floor action, when it occurred, had to be justified by convoluted arguments:

"Workers who get decent wages and conditions are going to be more efficient than those working under a sense of injustice."

The second women's conference, in 1943, passed resolutions on:

"100% unionism among women, closer cooperation between men and women workers in the workshops, carrying out of the union's policy of full support for the war, with particular attention to combatting absenteeism and lateness to ensure increased production."

This schizophrenia meant that they supported workers when they went out, but still tried to get them back as quick as possible. For instance in a dispute in a South Australian munitions factory, the union recommended a return to work on the basis of the management proposing "to confer with representatives of the unions involved and place the cards on the table."

THE IDEOLOGICAL BATTLE

For the working class, the war period meant an ideological battle. All of society's institutions were lined up behind the war effort, and workers who wanted to do something about their wages or conditions had to overcome incredible pressure. The leadership of most trade unions capitulated to the propaganda, and supported the "battle for production".

The FIA for instance had a position formally similar to the Sheet Metal Workers. In practice they campaigned harder against strikes, and when they did break out, support from the union was almost non-existent. They argued the need for "increased discipline" to deal with the "larrikin element" on the waterfront:

"We should not wait for the boss to sack these people, but we should sack them ourselves if they are not prepared to mend their ways and pull their full weight in the struggle against fascism."²⁴

The AEU never gave up the right to strike, although the Commonwealth Council was sometimes "perturbed" when strikes took place before informing officials.²⁵

The main propaganda tool used to manipulate women was, of course, "natural" femininity. In the early part of the war women's main role was thrift in the home. The Australian Women's Weekly²⁶ was in the forefront:

"Look natural" is the motto today. Obvious makeup is a thing of the past. . . . The girls . . . who hoards cosmetics . . . is plainly speaking a traitor (!) to her country, to other women and to her true self."

Austerity propaganda went to ridiculous lengths: an advertisement in the Women's Weekly in 1942 said:

"Yes - Betty's Handing Her Vegemite to the Troops! "It seems strange doesn't it, but every jar of vegemite you or your children go without actually helps our war effort. You see, our troops need Vegemite and plenty of it."

In 1942, the emphasis in the Women's Weekly changed to encourage women to go out to work: "Australia is calling on her women as never before."

The change in the magazine was certainly not unassociated with two of its top management, Frank Packer and Edward Theodore being appointed to the Allied Council, a body created to help solve manpower problems.

While it became more oriented to factory women, the Women's Weekly still emphasized femininity:

"Working hard at the factory all day, I haven't time for elaborate beauty treatments. But I've found the right cure for my skin - Lux Toilet Soap."

"When doing our job on munitions we don't neglect our appearance - but still keep our feminine charm by always having our Escapade Lipstick with us."

Judge Foster of the WEB comments on their wonderful dedication:

"Hats off to these women! No one who has not seen them can possibly appreciate how great is their contribution to the war effort."²⁷

We gave an example of the ideal woman:

"In one factory I saw a girl who had come straight from a beauty parlour. She was doing work that was dirty and hard on the hands. On being told that she had not long been married, I asked her where her husband was, and she said on a northern battle station. When she was asked how she found the work after a

beauty parlour, she said she liked it much better. I asked her why, and she answered, 'It's much more interesting and besides - I'm making cartridges for my husband to fire.'"

Thrift at home, hard-working and uncomplaining - was this a true picture of the war-time woman? A hint that not all women were so pliable comes in a comment from an American personnel expert at Lockheed-Vega:

"Most of our department heads prefer women between 25 and 35, married and above all, they prefer widows with children to support. We also give preference to the wives of soldiers and sailors."²⁸

A look at the actual industrial record of women during the war makes it clear that women were among the leadership of the working class.

THE MILITANCY OF WOMEN WORKERS

Of course men were involved in strikes during the war, particularly miners. But in the metal industry the war meant a dramatic change. Although wages were frozen, for men they were at a much higher level than during the depression. This was due to increased overaward payments, great increases in overtime at penalty rates, and "war loadings". For instance, Sydney newspapers were advertising for toolmakers at \$24 a week (not including overtime) when the current award was \$13.10. At this time an adult woman in the metal trades with 12 months experience received \$7.20. A girl under 16 got \$2.25. Because of the contrast, and because it was just handed to them, the men were reasonably satisfied. When they were involved in struggles they tended to be defensive ones, trying to protect themselves against the new women workers. Moreover, men with a tradition of unionism behind them were more inclined to follow the policies of the union leadership and accept support for the war effort.

The situation for women was quite different. Moving from housework or work in beauty parlours into "important" work for the first time they gained new confidence.

The wages for women were not only low - the wage situation was also quite chaotic.

At the beginning of the war, private industry was paying women the traditional 54% of the male rate. The Department of Munitions, under an agreement with the unions, paid 62% in its factories. In the 1942 Metal Trades Award, women with less than 3 months experience were awarded 65% and those with more, 75%. The WEB set rates for women in new jobs and in what had been men's work. In the metal trades this was mostly 90%. Women doing tradesmen's work were paid 100%.

In some workshops, women were paid two or three different rates for essentially the same work. In other cases, the company simply refused to pay the WEB rate (90%) and continued paying the lower rate of the Metal Trades Award. Even government munitions factories did this. In one example, the AEU had to intervene and the workers received back pay totalling about \$60,000.²⁹

Industrial action, short stoppages and strikes were frequent. Over and over again it is clear that the women were militant and wanted to fight, but every often the government or the unions sent them back to work after a short time, with empty promises or part gains.

It was strikes of women workers at two private munitions factories in 1942 which led to the setting up of the WEB.³⁰ Many sheetmetal factories such as Malles in Sydney and other workplaces such as the Small Arms Factory at had already achieved full equal pay.

Between 1943 and 1945 Muriel Heagney, Women's Organizer for the AEU, reported many instances in her log. In one dispute, "girls on the benches threatened reduction in output on benches of 60% of the male output, unless rates were equalised."³¹

Queensland munitions workers were sometimes given 24 hours notice to go to work in canneries at much lower pay. These women were hostile, and according to the Ironworkers' paper Labour News, were being "kept at work with difficulty."

In 1944, women at Bulima Cannery struck. A meeting of the unions was called - after they had already gone out. The unions appealed to the workers that, during this war, striking was only "a last resort". The women returned to work in return for negotiations which resulted in only a small gain: as increase of \$1.60 on their wage of \$6 for that season only, and after that a drop back to \$6.50.³²

When employers refused to pay the WEB rates as awarded, and used all sorts of delaying tactics, it was often only the strength of the workers that could enforce the decision. At Kenvenagang and English in Sydney, women sheet metal workers struck for over 5 weeks. The Trades and Labour Council had to be brought in, and with 100% solidarity the strike was won. The Sheet Metal Worker reports that "there was widespread interest and support through the trade, and voluntary collections were made to supplement relief."³³

At Simmonds Aerocessories in Melbourne, 132 women sheetmetal workers went on strike for over 4 months, supported by 150 engineers. The case went to the High Court but in the end the company gave in.

The union supported the stand of the women, but tried to prevent the strike, "The board (of the union) had no other course but to support the women in their decision to cease work . . . The officials of the branch endeavoured to come to an agreement with the shop committee, to try to come to satisfactory arrangements with the company to avoid any cessation of work."³⁴

At AWA in Ashfield (Sydney) the company refused to pay the \$10 granted by the WEB, and kept women on \$7.20. One hundred and fifty women and girls in the aircraft assembly section joined the AEU, and the union arbitrarily decided that only 75% of them were entitled to the WEB rate, there followed a three week strike. Eventually the women were "prevailed upon" to return to work in return for the government undertaking legal proceedings.³⁵ We are not told who did the prevailing, but we are left with a clear impression that the women workers were quite prepared to stay out longer.

The company of Richard Hughes (Sydney) refused to pay WEB rates for its women workers. The union (SMWU) concentrated on the courts, and the case dragged on for over 6 months. Each time the decision was given in favour of the union, the company appealed to another body with the full backing of the union that they were getting nowhere. In June, 1944 the 28 women doing the work which was involved in the test case went on strike, and the company locked out the rest of the employees, over 300. Direct action proved successful, and quick, and the settlement

meant \$6000 in back pay.³⁶

A first hand account of the atmosphere in a workshop during a strike meeting is given by Jessie Street:³⁷ a well known feminist of the time, who worked in a munitions factory in Footscray (Melbourne) under another name. The women there had been awarded 90%. The women called a stopwork meeting, which was addressed by the (male) union secretary of the FIA. He assured them they would get their money and urged them to return to work, "as the boys in the trenches." At this the women became even more angry and shouted at the secretary: "We know all about the boys in the trenches," "they're our husbands and sons." A very militant meeting led to a strike. When Evatt sent them a telegram saying he'd "bring pressure to bear" if they went back to work, the response was riotous. Finally Evatt agreed to pay the difference until the matter was settled, and the women returned to work.

During the war, women workers were in the forefront of militant action throughout industry. For example, the 1944 printing strike in Sydney sparked off by women and girls at the Sun.³⁸

In the more traditional areas of work, women felt they were doing work as important as those who replaced them, they were often more experienced and skilled, yet their wages were much lower. In 1941 Sydney textile workers struck in opposition to their all-male leadership — in August 25000 came out, and in September 9000 were out for two weeks.³⁹

EXODUS — THE END OF THE WAR

Right from the beginning of the war people were wondering what the post-war period would bring. In 1943, when women had just been admitted to the AEU, women in the metal trades were "questioning what their fate will be."⁴⁰

The metal unions generally declared themselves officially as out to defend the interests of their women members.

At the first AEU women's shop stewards' meeting, the Sydney District Secretary assured women that they were now full and equal members of the union. The rule change that had taken place in the engineering industry, involving increasing use of women's labour, apart altogether from the exigencies of a war economy.⁴¹

He hoped the conference would lay the foundation for adequate consideration of the "special problems of women in relation to war and post war industry."

The SMWU in 1943 condemned those who sought to create divisions among workers when it came to jobs. "We must remain united. Not preference for one against another, but work or full maintenance for all must be our slogan for the post war period."⁴²

And yet after the war, women left industry as fast as they had entered. Between 1945 and 1946, women dropped from 13% to 8% of the workforce in metal, machines and Vehicles.⁴³

Why did they leave? Of course many must have found the thought of returning to the home attractive, after the hardships of the war period. But it is also true that all social institutions united in sending them back to the home.

Trade union officials joined in wholeheartedly. E.C. McGrath, Federal Secretary of the Printing Industry Employees Union, had reminded women as early as 1943

not to forget their true place while temporarily at work.

"What is that place? Women should know. Queen Elizabeth, in a recent broadcast, proudly claimed that "in a hundred ways, women have filled the places of men who have gone to fight. After the war they would be called upon as homemakers to play a great part in rebuilding family life."

Lady Gawrie spoke to servicewomen recently, and is reported as saying: "We do not want our service women to become hard-faced and tough. After the war we want them to remain women and set up homes just as they would have done had there been no war." A woman employed on the trams shows a nice appreciation of things when saying: "My husband, who was a tram-guard, is now in the Middle East. I want equal pay so that he can get his job back when he comes home." An English woman making munitions said this: "I think that the more of these shells I get into the machine, the sooner Jack will come home from Libya. And then I think the more of these shells I handle the more money we'll have to start a home with."⁴⁴

Naturally, not all trade union officials were as bad as this. Nonetheless, most seem to have believed that it was in the natural order of things that women should leave when they were "no longer needed" at the end of the war.

The SMWU, which had been so vehement over women workers' right to equal pay and decent conditions, signed an agreement with AWA in 1944 over postwar retrenchments. Preference was to be given to men and boys — particularly where the women were on the (higher) WEB rates.⁴⁵ In February, 1945 the SMWU's newsheet published a cartoon showing a woman in overalls watching her husband shave. "Jealous?" he says. The SMWU still had a large female membership at this stage — in 1946 it was still 15%, though it had already dropped.

The Small Arms Factory in Lithgow, owned by the Department of Munitions, lost all their women workers after the war. In 1947, they wanted to reemploy women, and an agreement was reached with the unions, ASE, AEU and FIA.⁴⁶ The agreement was never implemented because sufficient male labour was found, but it is worth looking at all the same. Women were to get full equal pay, and the unions insisted on several conditions for hiring. Some of them are:

- 1 All male labour available shall be absorbed.
- 2 Local ex-employee blind males shall be given full consideration.
- 3 Females dependent upon our energies for livelihood shall be first eligible applicants.
- 4 Married women with no children shall be considered as second eligible applicants.

A detailed order of retrenchments was drawn up:

- (a) It is agreed that all female employees in manufacturing sections shall be retrenched before any male employee.
- (b) Agreed that married females with children (subject to clause (c))
- (c) That married women not dependent on own energies shall be the second line of retrenchment.
- (d) That after clauses (b) and (c) have been implemented female labour will be retrenched on first come, last to go basis.⁴⁷

This extraordinary document is probably an extreme example. Nonetheless, it's interesting that these men went

way beyond simply protecting their jobs and tried to distinguish between different categories of women.

There were, in this period, incidents of a quite different sort, where men stood up for women's right to work. Jessie Street describes an example of a Sydney factory, where 8 women remained after the war, still on equal pay. When management tried to cut their pay, the men threatened to strike. When the company then dismissed the women, saying it would employ only males, the men struck until the women were reinstated.⁴⁸

CONCLUSION

The most important fact to emerge from this history is that women in the metal industry have had periods of great militancy. Women are prepared to fight, even when the whole of society, including their own union leadership, is lined up against them.

The question that arises is why, with this militancy, the women allowed themselves to be sent back into the home so easily. It is because militancy in itself is not enough. The lack of a trade union tradition was one thing that allowed women to see through some of the war propaganda. This was a strength. But there was also a weakness — the lack of permanent organization which good trade union organization on the shop floor brings.

The unions to a certain extent realized this problem. Often they refer to the need to unionize women in the "true sense of the word". But very little was done to build on going organization among women workers, either by unions or by women themselves.

This is probably because almost everyone seems to have believed that the existence of large numbers of women in the industry was temporary. Even those women who wanted to stay in it themselves probably looked at it as a personal decision. Almost certainly they believed that in general women would leave industry.

Today, things are different. Women are in industry to stay, and most people know it. Today there is a possibility of building shop floor organization among women. I intend to take this subject up in a future article.

ABBREVIATIONS

AMWU	Amalgamated Metal Workers Union
AEU	Amalgamated Engineering Union
FIA	Federated Ironworkers Association
SMWU	Sheet Metal Working Industrial Union (sometimes abbreviated SMWU)
ASE	Australasian Society of Engineers
MTEA	Metal Trades Employers Association
WEB	Women's Employment Board

FOOTNOTES

- 1 This article is intended to provide a background to an understanding of women in the AMWU today. For that reason I have concentrated on the unions that went to make up the AMWU. Of those, before amalgamation women made up a small percentage of the membership for the AEU, but 20% of the AMWU, while the Boilermakers and Blacksmiths had no women members. The ASWU were themselves the result of an amalgamation of three unions — the Victorian Agricultural Implement Makers' Union the NSW Stovemakers' Union, and

the Sheet Metal Working Industrial Union.

Of course I have given information on women in other sections of the metal industry. There clearly is and was a fair amount of interchange of unskilled workers between the different metal unions. Also, the Munitions and Metal Workers' Union was important and influential during the war. After the war it amalgamated with the FIA, but by then it had shrunk a great deal.

My most detailed union information is from the AEU. "Mindful Militants" by T. Sheridan is a very convenient source. I have some certain amount of reading in the journal of the SMWU. But I have made no effort to seek primary sources for the FIA. The other important union in the metal industry about which I've said little, is the ETU.

In any case, in many of the shop floor struggles, it isn't possible to say which union was involved.

- 2 Edna Ryan and Anne Conlon, "Gentle Invaders", p. 112
- 3 "Women in the Engineering Industry", pamphlet, AEU, May, 1943, p. 4.
- 4 Ibid, p. 16
- 5 "Workers' Weekly", no. 57, 25-7-24
- 6 Penny Ryan and Tim Rouse, "Women, Arbitration and the Family", in *Women at Work*, p. 23
- 7 Constance Larmour, "Women's Wages and the WEB", in *Women at Work*, p. 55
- 8 Ryan and Rouse, op. cit., p. 16
- 9 A. W. Foster, "The Experience of the Women's Employment Board in Australia", in "International Labour Review" Vol. 52, p. 636
- 10 Larmour, op. cit., p. 53
- 11 Ryan and Conlon, op. cit., p. 129 (my emphasis)
- 12 Ibid., p. 129 (my emphasis)
- 13 quoted in Larmour, op. cit., p. 51
- 14 "Women in the Engineering Industry", p. 19 (my emphasis)
- 15 T. Sheridan, *Mindful Militants*, p. 13
- 16 Ibid., p. 52
- 17 "Women in the Engineering Industry", p. 5
- 18 Sheridan, op. cit., p. 163
- 19 Quoted in Ibid., p. 152
- 20 James Jeffreys, *The Story of the Engineers*, p. 260
- 21 Sheridan, op. cit., p. 160, gives the full story
- 22 "Women in the Engineering Industry", inside front cover
- 23 All the information in this section comes from "The Sheet Metal Worker" newsheet of the SMWU. Anyone wanting the source for a particular reference is welcome to write to me c/o this magazine.
- 24 E. Thornton, "Trade Unions and the War", Federal Council of the FIA, 1942, p. 10 (my emphasis)
- 25 Sheridan, op. cit., p. 148
- 26 Andrea Wright, "The Women's Weekly: Depression and the War Years", in "Refactory Girl", no. 3, p. 9. All quotes from the *Women's Weekly* are from this source.
- 27 Larmour, op. cit., p. 51
- 28 "Women in the Engineering Industry", p. 20
- 29 Muriel Heagney, "Women in the Engineering Industry", article in "The 25th Anniversary of the AEU", Australia, 1945, p. 34 (Not to be confused with an AEU pamphlet of the same name)
- 30 J. Hutson, "Six Wage Concepts", p. 114
- 31 Ryan and Rouse, op. cit., p. 25
- 32 Ryan and Conlon, op. cit., p. 133
- 33 "The Sheet Metal Worker", no. 40, June 1943
- 34 "The Sheet Metal Worker", no. 40, June 1943, no. 42, 1943, no. 45, April, 1944
- 35 Heagney, op. cit., p. 53
- 36 "The Sheet Metal Worker", no. 44, February, 1944; no. 45, April, 1945; no. 47, August, 1945; no. 48, October, 1945
- 37 Jessie Street, "Truth or Repose", p. 216-221
- 38 James Hagan, "Craft Power", in *Strikes*, p. 174
- 39 Peter Spearritt, "Women in Sydney Factories, 1920-50", in *Women at Work*, p. 45
- 40 "Women in the Engineering Industry", p. 7
- 41 Heagney, op. cit., p. 53
- 42 "The Sheet Metal Worker", no. 39, April, 1943.
- 43 Ryan and Rouse, op. cit., p. 16
- 44 Ibid, p. 28
- 45 Ibid, p. 27
- 46 This agreement is in the research files in the AMWU office in Sydney
- 47 Street, op. cit., p. 124

The first Right to Work March, 4000 strong, marches into London.



The Right to Work Campaign was launched in Britain twelve months ago. It did not appear to be an ideal time: Labour government had been power for some two years, and their "Social Contract" had meant the lowest level of industrial disputes for many years. Politically the situation was oppressively stagnant.

However, three factors suggested that the campaign could be a success. Firstly, it had begun to sink in throughout Britain that there would be long-term high unemployment. It was an issue that would be around for some years. Secondly, because the increase in unemployment and the continued erosion of workers' living standards was taking place under Labour, there would be a growing number of workers looking for means to fight back independently of their official leaders. Obviously this could not be done entirely inside the official trade union movement, which was working hand in glove with the Government. Finally, a foundation for the campaign already existed in the trade union bodies and individual militants associated with the National Rank and File Movement.

The NREM took the initiative in launching the Right to Work Campaign, with the first major national focus to be a march of re-employed workers from Liverpool to London.

The central aim of the campaign was to unite employed and unemployed in the fight. Harry McShane, who was Secretary of the Scottish Unemployed Workers' movement during the Depression, and now supporting the Right to Work campaign said:

"There was resistance (to unemployment) in the 30's and a great deal of courage was shown, in those struggles. But there were weaknesses of which we were aware.

"Our greatest was our failure to secure the support of the workers still in employment in the fight against unemployment. This is something that the National Right to Work Campaign must overcome."

Consequently, in the 10 basic demands of the campaign, there is a very strong emphasis on what those who have industrial power, the employed, can do to help the unemployed.

The role of the unemployed was to be different from that of the Thirties, too. This time it was not to be silent, suffering and passive marches like the Jarrow Crusades. The unemployed were angry, and their energy was to be used to show that anger, and in organising to get shops and factory committees to take up their case.

For example: it was one thing to have, say, one shop steward trying to get the stewards' committee to stop overtime working and fight for taking on more employees instead. It was another if there was a picket of fifty or one hundred unemployed from the local Right to Work Campaign making a fuss outside the meeting or picketing the gate. Unemployment became a human reality then, not just a news bulletin or statistics.

THE ROLE OF THE REFORMISTS

There are three distinct approaches to unemployment in the British Labour Movement.

There is the right wing of the Labour Party, including such erstwhile left-wingers as Michael Foot. They describe the situation as shocking, tragic, very tragic or extremely

THE DEMANDS

OPPOSITION to all forms of redundancy. No voluntary redundancy, no job loss through "natural" wastage. No productivity dealing.

FOR 100 per cent trade union closed shops with shopfloor trade union control of hiring and manning levels. No discrimination or blacklisting. Trade union district registration of all jobs and protection of district manning levels.

NO CO-OPERATION with the employers — no to all participation schemes.

UNCOMPROMISING opposition to all forms of racialism and discrimination. For the equal right of women to a full time job.

FOR the 35 hour week without loss of pay. For official overtime bans to force more jobs.

FIVE days' work or five days' pay. For occupations to force the nationalisation without compensation of firms that cannot guarantee the right to work.

STOP the cuts

BREAK the freeze, for across the board increases to protect living standards.

FULL wages for the unemployed and no means testing. \$12 a week increase now for all unemployed workers as an immediate step towards this.

FOR full trade union rights for the unemployed.

The Right To Work Campaign

by Doug McCarty

tragic (depending on whether the figures have gone up or not), and do nothing else. The vast majority of union leaders behave similarly, making greater or lesser noise, but do still doing nothing. Obviously they cannot, because to do something would be to threaten their Labour Government — which, as long as it stays in office, and a soon as the economic situation will permit, is going to pass all kinds of marvelous legislation.

Secondly, the "Broad Left" elements — left-wing Labour and the Communist Party — appear and sound more aggressive. But they are living with a contradiction. For some years they have been pointing to the left-wingers in the union leadership (in particular High Scanlon of the AUEW and Jack Jones of the TGWU) as those who are carrying out the struggle in the highest levels, and so deserving of full support. Now however, these "left" officials have moved well to the right and are fully behind the Labour Government's attack on wages, living standards and its acceptance of high unemployment.

For the Broad Left to organise effectively against unemployment would bring them into conflict with Scanlon, Jones, and their ilk. But to do nothing would alienate their own supporters in the rank and file of the unions. Their answer is the "Stage Army" campaign.

In this style of campaign a prominent "official" Trade

Union body calls a conference, or lobby of Parliament, or a demonstration. Prominent union leaders and "left" politicians are invited as key speakers, to say how angry they are. A long resolution condemning the Government is passed. Their "stage army" of rank and file trade unionists turn up to vote, or march, or lobby, and then exit stage right until they are summoned once again.

These initiatives are welcome, but nothing happens between the events. There is no real organisation for the campaign. And up to the time I left Britain in October, there had been several of these events organised by the "Assembly on Unemployment" and the "Liasion Committee in Defence of Trade Unions" — but the unemployed had not been invited to any of them.

THE RANK AND FILE APPROACH

The Right To Work Campaign, by contrast, is based first and foremost on the self-activity of the rank and file workers involved in it. It is not just a question of getting shop stewards' committees to carry resolutions, but to do what they can do to force their own employer to do something about unemployment. Similarly, the unemployed must see what they themselves can do locally

a group of well-meaning teachers tried to use "anti-authoritarian", "child-centred" methods, only to wind up with the same old mess: a hierarchy within the classroom. Those the teacher liked were at the top, those who displeased the teacher were at the bottom.

The reason is the pressures of the surrounding society. There can be no socialism in one classroom.

Sharp finishes up with a discussion of what to do about schools. Her proposals are more or less limited to passive study:

"a process of self-education... the setting up of study, reading and discussion groups among teachers which can... sensitize educators... and provide a basis for a reorientation of the knowledge component of what is transmitted in schools. On the other hand it can serve as a foundation for a commonly shared, systematic and coherent world view."

She devotes one sentence to the "need for an activist struggle", but hastens to warn of the dangers of hasty action — then returns to theoretical questions.

That will not be much encouragement to teachers and students, who are confronted first and foremost with the need to struggle. Putting off the struggle until they have achieved a profound theoretical clarity is a luxury they can hardly afford.

Teacher and student activists who are to be "exposed to a critical analysis of the whole structure of bourgeois hegemony" can hardly be expected to take it seriously unless it is developed out of, and in conjunction with, on-going struggle.

Marx wrote that "Every step of real movement is more important than a dozen programs." That is also true of a dozen study groups, for the study groups cannot live without real movement.

This question appears to be the subject of some debate within the Radical Education Group, which produces the magazine. It would be well if that debate also took up the style of writing. Sharp's

penetrating analysis is hidden behind a byzantine prose. What is a teacher, frazzled after a hard day to make of paragraphs like this:

"These teachers share the dilemmas of most educators. They are moralists and utopians who inadequately comprehend the economic, social and political preconditions for the goals they profess. Their view of freedom is individualistic, voluntaristic and psychologistic, involving a romantic idealization of the child. The perspective they adhere to is not socially situated, or located within an analysis of how individual actions and activities occur within a social context..."

And so on, and on. Alas, one of the dilemmas of educators is that radicals haven't written many readable articles on education. If the RED magazine can improve its style to match its content, it could fill that gap very well.

Tom O'Lincoln

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Man in the field and Woman for the hearth: Man for the sword and for the needle she: Man with the head and Woman with the heart: Man to command and Woman to obey: else confusion.*

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by Tony Cliff V1 \$7.50, V2 \$9.00\$1 p&p)

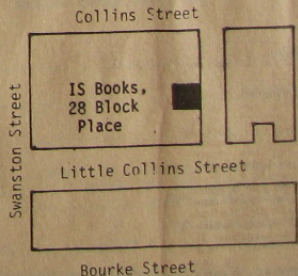
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SURVEY

INDUSTRY

Explosion in 1977?

Three factors should come together this year to provide important opportunities for revolutionaries in industry.

The first is the weakness of the government. Fraser is isolated and the cabinet is visibly divided. The press and big business are openly critical of the government. This must mean workers will feel more capable of beating Fraser.

At the same time, the government's position in the ideological battle is weakened. One important card held by Fraser was the popular myth, secretly shared even by many militants, that the Liberals were more competent to manage the economy. This myth made it easier to propagate arguments that wage rises cause unemployment, that wage rises cause inflation, and that austerity measures are necessary. After the devaluation, workers will feel much more confident in brushing aside and disputing such ideas.

The third factor is the economic recovery. Undoubtedly there will be some improvement in profits and production as a result of devaluation. Much will be made of this by the government. This will both encourage workers to demand wage rises, as their share of the recovery, and put them in a stronger bargaining position.

COLLAPSE OF WAGE INDEXATION

Connected with this is the likely collapse of wage indexation. Even if the ACTU does not withdraw from the system, the more militant unions are likely to wage more independent struggles. After all, full indexation will almost certainly have ceased to occur, so that the bias of the system will be obvious.

The increased economic struggle

will encounter two obstacles. One of course is the government. We will have to watch the proposed industrial police very carefully. But these police will be hard to use, since they are a threat to the union bureaucrats in a way that wage controls are not. The main obstacle to militant struggle in 1977 will be the trade union bureaucracy.

Hawke and the centre-right will continue to call for moderation, probably beginning to emphasize the possibility of Labor regaining power. Leave it to the ALP, they will say, and don't rock the boat. By and large, Hawke's role should be useful to us, as it will establish the idea that rank and file action is essential. Indeed, it has already helped to establish the idea, and also created a healthy suspicion about union leaders.

FAKE LEFT WILL RESTRAIN RANK AND FILE

More dangerous will be the actions of the fake-left. SPA and CPA union leaders, and to a slightly lesser extent the Socialist Left officials, will attempt to restrain their rank and file also. Their arguments will be more sophisticated. The most common may be this: "To beat Fraser we need trade union unity. No point in the left unions sticking their necks out. But the centre and rightwing unions won't go along with us. It's all their fault."



In response to the sell-outs of union leaders in the coming period, there will be a greatly increased tendency for rank and file action independent of the officials. We have already observed this tendency in Melbourne, where the semi-organised rank and file has entered into significant struggles against the entire spectrum of the bureaucracy — over Medibank and Newport.

Indexation on the skids

The April 30 indexation decision was something of a turning point in the wages struggle in Australia.

For two years, union leaders have been trying to avoid confronting the Indexation guidelines. Invariably, wage claims have been argued for on the basis of 'catch-up' or 'changes in work-value'. Despite the occasional fanfare of "We're getting out of indexation" from various officials, claims which have fallen outside the guidelines have been quietly dropped.

But the \$5.70 granted on April 30 was the worst decision yet in the history of indexation. In Adelaide, 400 shop stewards had demanded a one-day national strike from the ACTU if the full claim wasn't granted. In Melbourne, a mass meeting of shop stewards had thrown out a tame Trades Hall resolution to do nothing, and was only persuaded not to vote for strike action by an appeal from John Halfpenny to "check with the rank-and-file". And in Brisbane, a lunch-time rally during the indexation hearing had drawn an unprecedented 3000 workers with thousands striking for the day.

ACTU CAUGHT

So the ACTU was caught between the biggest cut in real wages yet under indexation on the one hand, and the strongest pressure for action to date from the rank-and-file on the other.

Its response was predictably feeble — Bob Hawke called on unions to pursue the full indexation by putting in individual claims. This was given a dose of much needed credi-

bility when two unions whose Federal leaderships are strong Hawke supporters — the Transport Workers Union and the Storemen and Packers Union — immediately announced they were doing this.

Little more was heard from the Storemen and Packers, but in the Transport Workers Union things started to get interesting. For petrol tanker drivers and aircraft refuellers had had a log of claims in for 5 months with no response from the oil companies. The wage claim section of the log was quickly converted to a claim for full indexation and meetings were held around the country.

Victoria and Tasmania were the only states to vote to go out. And in Tasmania the action was brief. Only Victoria voted to stay out a week. But then — two surprises followed.

First, the T.W.U. officials made no attempt to call off the Victorian strike — even though the Victorian T.W.U. is quite right-wing and the absence of action in the other states would have given them the perfect excuse. Then, after a week, T.W.U. Federal secretary Ivan Hodgson — a close confidant of Bob Hawke — made a speech to the Victorian strikers which amounted to a recommendation to continue the strike and flew directly in the face of earlier "We-can't-do-anymore" speeches from the Victorian officials. Thanks largely to Hodgson's speech, the strikers voted 231-108 to continue the strike for another week.

VIOLENT GOVERNMENT INTERVENTION

Thanks to the petrol shortage, Victoria came close to a total shutdown. The Federal Government threatened the use of troops, Hamer rushed through emergency legislation, and the tanker drivers were intimidated back to work. They won about 80 cents, plus a number of minor improvements to conditions. (Reports that they gained between 6 and 10 dollars are incorrect).

Now, as we go to press, air traffic controllers are copping the fury of the Federal Government over a one-week strike for a 36 per cent pay rise. While their high pay and status, and the fact that they are not affiliated to the ACTU, make it harder for unionists to identify with them, the enormity of their claim and the powerful position they have industrially makes their

demand a serious challenge to the Government's wage cutting strategy.

Three points come out of this.

1. Rank-and-file pressure on the ACTU to lead a fight over wages is now so strong, that a union leadership close to Hawke has been forced to go to the brink of Army intervention in an attempt to smash the guidelines.

2. The Federal Government is now intervening quite openly and violently in major industrial disputes. While this has a short term advantage for the ruling class in intimidating strikers back to work (as in the petrol strike) and preventing individual employers from caving in to the unions, it also makes workers see the Government as their enemy in wage disputes — i.e. it politicizes the wage struggle.

3. With the Government being increasingly seen as the enemy in wage disputes, it will become much harder for union officials to keep struggles isolated. The tactic often put by officials to unionists that "We'll fight this as a special case under the guidelines that won't affect anyone else" will have less and less credibility. Conversely, calls for spreading of strikes will be given a much more sympathetic hearing by unionists.

ASIA

Growing Power of the Extreme Right

Building a strong nation state goes hand in hand with building a strong capitalist economy. It follows that for the underdeveloped countries the problem of national unity is a vexed one.

The central government, to develop the country, must try to accumulate enough surplus for investment. The surplus invariably must be drawn from the countryside. But

the countryside is inhabited by landlords, and provincial towns by local vested interests. Neither is pleased to allow a surplus to be drawn from them.

Thus the political line up in many third world countries consists of a reactionary right wing made up of the interests resisting the demands of the centre, and a governing party and bureaucracy trying continually to increase its control.

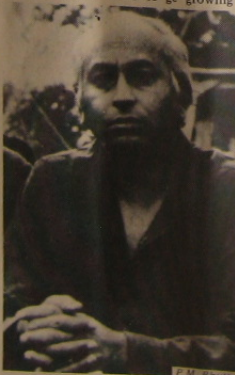
Whether the centre can dominate as it would like naturally depends on its successes in developing in the national economy. For economic successes mean not only prestige for the government, but a somewhat lessened need to further squeeze the countryside.

The fact that the central government usually presides over the state sector of the economy, and that it is fighting such reactionary enemies, is part of the basis for the "left" image of rulers like Indira Gandhi.

WEAKENING OF CENTRE'S HOLD

As world capitalism enters into crisis, the third world economies are the first to falter. As a result, the struggle between the centre and the provinces over their share of the national economy intensified, and the centre's hold over the country is weakened.

The result seems to be growing



F.M. BRUIJIS

centrifugal pressures in a number of countries, especially in Asia.

The Indian elections brought to power a coalition of sectional interests: rural rich, religious groups, and regional parties. As befits a reactionary movement, their ideology was Jayaprakash Narayan: a saintly man no doubt, but an intellectual luddite who wants to abandon modern industry and return to the spinning wheel.

Now two more recent elections in Asia have followed a similar pattern.

BRUTE FORCE

Pakistan's Ali Bhutto did better than Gandhi, to be sure — he made sure he won his elections. But the ballot-rigging and intimidation was so blatant that his opponents took to the streets. Since Bhutto had long since jailed any left-wing or half-way progressive opposition, his opponents were religious fanatics and regional interests.

Pakistan was never very united. Even after the eastern section became an independent Bangladesh, the rump in the west remained fragmented. There is Baluchistan, scene of anti-government tribal fighting and coveted by Iran. There is Northwest Frontier, eyed by of Afghanistan (and behind them the USSR). The fall of Bhutto could have led rapidly to the collapse of central government rule. However, for the moment he appears to have crushed his opponents with

brutal force.

Meanwhile in Indonesia, the elections also brought problems for the government of General Suharto. Indonesia's "economic miracle" since the fall of Sukarno has been based on selling off the country's resources and truly massive borrowing. The prospect for the future is for growing economic difficulties as the leans come due.

And Indonesia is the most fragmented state in Asia. Tiny East Timor is waging a remarkable campaign for independence. As the economic crisis grows, the danger of regional secession movements led by local vested interests grows as well.

Under the circumstances, the failure of the government's Golkar party to achieve its vote targets is probably very significant.

In Indonesia, as in the subcontinent, the masses seem to rally behind reactionary parties for sheer lack of any alternative. If voters in Java have supported the Muslim party, it is surely not out of religious fervour but for lack of any other legal opposition.

Similarly, in India the masses turned out in their millions to listen to hacks like Jagjivan Ram and Morarji Desai. In Pakistan, the right-wing can call general strikes.

The absence of a serious left wing opposition in any of these countries is a tragedy, to say the least. For the one force that is capable of solving the tasks of national unity is the working class. But without a revolutionary leadership, the workers of Asia remain little more than a plaything for political manipulators.



Mary Kathleen Uranium mine.

URANIUM and the Right to Work

The article on the uranium movement in this issue touches on the problem of alternative employment for workers at Mary Kathleen. A group called Environmentalists for the Right to Work has been established in Sydney. The following are excerpts from a draft program being prepared for this group by Pam Townsend.

Environmentalists criticise an economic system that destroys the natural environment. Environmentalists for the Right to Work also criticise that system for its inability to provide jobs despite continuing shortages of housing, schools, decent public transport. We believe that everyone has the right to a job that is both personally fulfilling and socially useful. A system that cannot provide these sorts of jobs to all people is not in the best interests of all people.

Australia is the ideal place for the development of new highly labour intensive industries such as solar equipment, pollution control, public transport, recycling industries or jobs fixing up the existing environmental damage. We also support the creation of more jobs in such areas as health centres, women's centres and education. All these are beneficial to the natural environment.

The Uranium companies and the Government claim that if uranium is mined and exported, thousands of jobs will be created. This is not true. The recent Fox Report stated that after the initial construction phase — which will employ 600 people — there will be employment for only 250 miners. In fact, uranium mining will actually cause unemployment by diverting investment money away from labour intensive manufacturing industries.

Environmentalists for the Right to Work are committed to resisting uranium mining for both the dangers of nuclear power and because we see it as a threat to employment.

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This month we feature

WHY YOU SHOULD BE A SOCIALIST
PAUL FOOT

...the case for the new Socialist Workers Party

Earlier this year the International Socialists of Great Britain changed their name to Socialist Workers Party.

In the early 1960's they were a small fringe group arguing for a new rank and file revolutionary socialist party.

Now the SWP are challenging racism in Britain, campaigning against pay cuts, fighting for the right to work.

Paul Foot writes about the SWP's idea on the crisis, the socialist alternative, the Labour Party, the Trade Unions, etc etc.

WHY YOU SHOULD BE A SOCIALIST
by Paul Foot

\$1.00 (40 cents post)
[available June]

CRIMES OF THE POWERFUL: Marxism, Crime and Deviance
by Frank Pearce.
\$6 (40cents post)

If Alexander Barton and his kid ever go to jail, some criminologist might write a report on why they turned to crime. Did they have deprived childhoods, broken families, mental deficiency in the family?

It's very unlikely that somebody would say that Thomas Barton didled his company because he wasn't breast fed as a baby. But criminologists do say such things about the working class people who are in prison.

Pearce argues that society determines what a crime is and what its causes are. The sharp dealer in business is not a criminal, the petty shoplifter is The Powerful — the ruling class, the corporate crooks — decide who is a criminal and who is not.

Pearce also looks at organized crime in America, how the ruling class "sponsors" the crime syndicates, and how racketeers influence politicians.

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URANIUM ...and Worker Power

by DAVID SHAW

The most urgent question facing the movement against uranium in this country is the question of strategy. In this article I want to briefly review the dangers of uranium mining and nuclear power, but then proceed to a discussion of the history of the struggle and the problems of strategy.

Australia has 25% of the known easily recoverable uranium reserves. Australian uranium will be exported for use in nuclear power stations in Europe, America and Japan. In summary, the hazards of uranium are:¹

1. Routine discharges of radiation into the atmosphere in normal reactor operation.
2. Catastrophic release of radiation following a "core melt-down" or other accident.
3. Deliberate use of nuclear materials by criminals (especially plutonium).
4. Weapons proliferation.
5. No known safe way to store radioactive waste for periods of up to 500,000 years.
6. Undesirable political measures to deal with these hazards.

Australia would also face special problems of its own:

1. Alienation of Aboriginal land.
 2. Destruction of parts of the Kakadu National Park.
- Nuclear power is the ultimate example of the irrational technology capitalism is capable of producing. It even fails to do what its supporters say it can. It is no cheaper than coal-generated power. A massive nuclear program may consume more energy than it produces for the first 20-30 years of operation.

But nuclear power's competitiveness with other energy sources doesn't really matter to the capitalist class. A dozen or so firms control nearly the entire world energy industry and the same firms often have control over coal, oil and nuclear energy (eg GE/Utah).

THE HISTORY OF THE ISSUE

Uranium mining in Australia has occurred off and on for 25 years. During the 50's Australian uranium was used in British and US nuclear bombs. Mining ceased in the

early 60's because of a world glut of uranium for nuclear weapons.

In the early 70's there were massive uranium discoveries in the Northern Territory and Western Australia. The MacMahon government approved new export contracts for uranium as fuel in nuclear reactors.

At this time the French were staging bomb tests in the Pacific. The "Greenpeace" movement against these tests formed the nucleus of "Friends of the Earth",² the environmental group that later led the anti-nuclear campaign.

After the Labor victory in 1972 a moratorium was placed on the signing of any further uranium export contracts. This had nothing to do with worries about nuclear power. It was an attempt to improve uranium prices.

The anti-uranium movement began in earnest in early 1975. Ranger Uranium was preparing its environment impact statement³ for its mine in Arnhem Land. Following the Radical Ecology Conference at Easter 1975, Friends of the Earth (FOE) held a national meeting and decided to launch a major campaign to stop uranium mining.

However, no strategy was worked out. This would have been the time to start intensive work with trade unionists. Instead, FOE organised demonstrations, press releases, a bicycle ride to Canberra, and called for public enquiry into uranium mining and nuclear power to follow the Ranger environment impact statement.

Little attention was paid to trade union officials and no attention to workers on the job. The social composition of FOE made this difficult, but the organisation could not consist of students, professionals and politicised hippies forever. Nevertheless in April 1975 FOE had a partial victory when the government announced the Fox Enquiry into uranium exports. For the next 18 months the anti-

URANIUM

uranium movement would remain fixated by this enquiry.

In the atmosphere of public debate around uranium the union movement started to formulate its own views on the uranium. In March 1975 the Queensland branch of the AMWU said it would ban uranium mining if it got enough public support. In August the Queensland Trades and Labor Council black banned uranium mining.

On the face of it the greens were winning the battle without even trying. Unions were placing bans on uranium all over the place.

In fact the bans meant little. For a start they were imposed by union officials or TLC delegates without consulting their members. In theory the Queensland AMWU had a ban on uranium. In practice, AMWU members continued to work on construction of mining facilities at Mary Kathleen. The Queensland TLC had a ban on uranium but no-one knew when it took effect. These "bans" were nothing more than pious statements of opinion.

Another pious statement of opinion occurred at the ACTU Congress on September 20. Congress voted to oppose mining pending the outcome of the Fox enquiry, but opposed placing any bans.

By early 1976 three features of the anti-uranium movement were obvious:

1. A reliance on the outcome of the Fox enquiry. Most union "bans" were dependent on the outcome. Anti-uranium groups, having called for the enquiry, now hoped for a favourable result.

2. A middle class movement against uranium mining. Although broader groups than FOE operated in most cities, (Campaign Against Nuclear Power in Brisbane, Movement Against Uranium Mining in Melbourne) the movement still had very few worker participants. The movement's activities were geared to middle class people: what worker could go on a ten-day bike ride to Canberra?

3. Trade union participation was only at the top level. Union policies on uranium were decided by officials without much rank and file education or consultation.

So the struggle continued, but so did construction work at Mary Kathleen. FOE advocate Wieslaw Lichaz did fine work at the enquiry. FOE sent speakers to clubs, ALP branches, schools and even the occasional union meeting. Labor councils all over Australia opposed and even banned uranium mining. In Queensland the trade union anti-nuclear lobby was formed. This did a lot of good work in making sure the TLC maintained its opposition to nuclear power. But all these actions seemed a little irrelevant as long as rank and file unionists were not involved.

On April 30 1976, the Australian Railways Union placed a ban on all operations associated with uranium mining. Judging by the publicity the ARU was serious about enforcing the ban!

News of the ban provoked an immediate response from the workers at Mary Kathleen uranium mine — mostly AWU members. On May 7 a stopwork meeting in the town unanimously condemned the ARU and called for uranium mining to go ahead.

This was hardly a surprising response. Naturally the workers were worried about their jobs. More importantly, they were encouraging and capitalising on the feelings of the workers in order to destroy the uranium campaign. It is notable that the AWU has done little to fight for jobs for its members anywhere else.

Meanwhile the unions opposing uranium mining were doing almost nothing to explain the dangers of nuclear



A fuel assembly is lowered into the core of a pressurised water reactor.

power to their members or to fight for alternative employment for the workers at Mary Kathleen.

THE STRUGGLE HOTS UP

On May 19 the issue came to a head. Jim Assenbruck, a shunter in the Townsville rail yards was sacked for carrying out the ARU ban. He refused to couple up wagons full of sulphur for Mary Kathleen. The ARU and AFULE (engine drivers) at Townsville immediately went on strike. The ARU and AFULE called a national rail strike for May 24.

The rail strike really brought uranium to the public eye. Attendance at FOE meetings shot up several fold. Public opinion polls taken shortly after showed significant public concern about uranium.¹ Most importantly, however, the rail strike involved rank and file workers in the campaign.

The strike at Townsville had been a spontaneous rank and file action and the ARU now made the effort to involve members in other places. The day after the strike, guards handed out leaflets in the trains headed "Why the Rail Strike?", explaining the hazards of nuclear power. The

ARU held meetings of its members throughout the state to discuss the uranium issue.

Jim Assenbruck got his job back, but the sulphur went to Mary Kathleen. A special unions conference on June 4 voted to allow mining but not export to go ahead at Mary Kathleen. So in one respect the strike was defeated. On the other hand, the strike set a new pattern of anti-uranium activity.

The question was whether this pattern of job meetings and mass work with rank and file unionists would continue. Or would the anti-uranium groups return to protest politics the Fox Enquiry and lobbying top union officials?

In June a national meeting of anti-uranium groups was held to discuss these questions. It was moved at the meeting that FOE withdraw from the Fox enquiry and engage in a public campaign to discredit it. This was undoubtedly the correct tactic. The Fox enquiry was going to give uranium mining the go-ahead, even if it was conditional. Most union bans were pending the outcome of the enquiry. To continue to give credit to a procedure which was stacked against the environmentalists that mining proceed seemed ridiculous. However, the meeting in its wisdom instructed FOE to continue in the enquiry.

The meeting's own saving grace was its decision to concentrate on an intensive rank and file education amongst members of six key unions: the ARU, AFULE, AWU, TWU, WWF and Seamen.

On June 29 the ACTU reaffirmed its ban on uranium export but not mining. By now it was clear uranium would not be stockpiled forever and that the crunch would come soon. Despite this the movement reverted back to its old strategy. The second decision of the national meeting was never implemented.

The next couple of months saw the ACTU gearing up for a complete sell-out. Mary Kathleen workers clamouring for their jobs and anti-uranium unions doing nothing to find them alternative employment. FOE was absorbed in the Fox enquiry and the middle class. Everyone held their breath waiting the outcome of the Fox enquiry.

Another national anti-uranium meeting on November 7 retreated further. FOE was relieved of sole responsibility for the campaign and a new umbrella group was formed called "Uranium Moratorium".

UM watered down the demand of "keep uranium in the ground" to a call for a five year halt to mining to allow public discussion.

On October 28 the Fox report was released. It recommended that uranium mining be allowed to proceed with strict conditions. One week later the ACTU special conference voted to lift all bans on existing contracts. The ARU and AMWSU agreed to abide by this decision. The backdown was almost complete.

Incredibly after all this the UM still takes the same line. UM continues to quote the Fox report that went against them and continues to pursue the bankrupt strategy of an orchestrated public debate and a five year moratorium on mining.

PUBLIC DEBATE OR WORKERS' ACTION

The anti-uranium movement will inevitably lose out if our strategy consists of action to support some kind of vague public debate. We simply do not have the resources or access to the media to compete with the uranium companies.

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The public debate strategy failed in California in June 1976. In that State a plebiscite was held on nuclear power. In the final two weeks before the vote, the nuclear companies engaged in a massive advertising campaign. In two weeks this advertising campaign swung public opinion 15% their way and they won a comfortable victory.

The public debate strategy is obviously an attempt to broaden support by watering down demands. That is a good tactic sometimes. However in this case the real issues have been obscured and pro-uranium groups are using the debate to their own advantage.

The "great debate" which UM hoped for isn't happening. The planned day of discussion on February 1 never got off the ground. Now the only major activity of UM is a national petition. Meanwhile mining at Mary Kathleen is going ahead and Pancontinental, Western Mining and Queensland Mines are getting ready to start elsewhere in Australia.

THE WAY FORWARD

No-one opposes public debate in itself. It will inevitably occur when a vigorous campaign against uranium is underway. But public debate will never stop uranium mining. It will take a trade union black ban to do that. A successful black ban requires intensive work to educate and involve rank and file in key unions involved in the nuclear fuel cycle.

The most important unionists in the struggle — the 300 workers at Mary Kathleen — have been virtually ignored. If the AMWSU and BWIU were serious in their opposition to uranium they would have been investigating alternative employment for their members. If paid adequate severance pay, the Mary Kathleen workers could perhaps have been located in the new coal mines in the Bowen Basin to the south.⁵

Further uranium mining can be stopped. The Northern Territory TLC and the ACTU still retain bans on Northern Territory uranium. But these are sure to be lifted unless the rank and file works is done.

The environmental movement is paying the penalty for years of ignoring the organised working class and we can't expect results overnight. But in the last analysis only the working class can stop uranium mining. And that means a radical change in strategy for the movement against nuclear power.

FOOTNOTES

1. See Alan Roberts, "The Politics of Nuclear Power", an Arena publication; Walter Patterson, "Nuclear Power", Penguin; Amory Lovins, "Non-Nuclear Futures", FOE.
2. FOE is a world-wide environmental group concerned with many issues besides nuclear power. FOE in Australia was established in 1972.
3. Under the Environmental Protection Act, Ranger Uranium was required by the Minister for Environment to prepare a statement of the environmental impact of its proposals. The subsequent Fox enquiry dealt with the Ranger proposals in particular, but was broadened to consider also the whole nuclear issue.
4. "Age" poll, July 31, 1976.
5. Utah mines plan a large open cut coal mine at Norwich Park. The skills of the Mary Kathleen workers would be suited to work in this mine.

THE STRUGGLE AT FAIRFAX

DON'T BUY SCAB PAGES
The Sydney Morning Herald
A SCAB PUBLICATION
The National Times
A SCAB PUBLICATION



ANATOMY OF A STRIKE
by Tom O'Lincoln

The 1970's are bringing a revolution to the Australian newspaper industry. It is a revolution in technology, which has already transformed printing overseas. The American magazine, Barron's Financial Weekly, says:

"The newspaper industry is not yet in a position to write, edit, compose and print an entire paper from a portable computer terminal. But within two or three years the technology to do so will be available.

"Its high initial cost and the remnants of union resistance, will doubtless slow its adoption. But the composing room is already well on the way to being automated out of existence; the printing trades at many newspaper are being eliminated through negotiated natural attrition vacant jobs are left unfilled; and within 10 years the most technologically advanced papers will have no more than a handful of employees left with any claim to following a trade dating back to the time of Gutenberg."

The changes have already restored profitability to an industry which was in serious decline in the USA not so long ago. Australian newspaper publishers, led by the Fairfax interests, are anxious to follow suit.

In 1975, Fairfax Executive Manager T. H. Farrell waxed eloquent about the technological changes he had in the pipeline:

"There are video-screens on which reporters write stories and sub-editors sub stories, connected directly to computers and type-setters. There are video-screens which allow sub-editors to retrieve text from computer storage, lay out the stories on a page and dispatch the made-up page, heads and all, to a typesetter.

"There are computers which will accept and store tens of thousands of classified ads, sort them into correct classifications and into alphabetical order and pass them out to a typesetter at the rate of a page every 30 seconds. All these devices are available and can be bought virtually off the shelf."

Farrell went on to speak of the company's "tradition of care for the welfare of our employees, a humane approach to their problems and a careful regard for its responsibility as the source of their livelihood." But all the fine words notwithstanding, Fairfax workers were naturally apprehensive. They sought guarantees, in black and white, that the revolution in printing would not cost them their jobs.

FAIRFAX RAT ON THEIR GUARANTEES

At first the unions believed that they had guarantees of job security. But in the course of the past two years it has become obvious that the company wanted to wriggle out of its commitments.

In June 1974, Company Secretary H.E. Scofford had stated:

"In the long term we are all well aware of the advanced technological changes that are in the offing, most of which will require negotiations at the Union and Chapel Executive level before they are implemented.

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Again, we expect full co-operation in the course of such negotiations, and a full study by all parties of the implications of the changes. The Company again gives the assurance that such changes will not involve the loss of individual employment in the Company."

When the unions later produced this statement in court, Farrell replied that he had been unaware of the existence of this guarantee, until he had been shown it recently by the unions. But the unions were able to produce a statement by Farrell himself, quoted in the Fairfax staff news, that no one would lose their jobs through automation. This was company policy, said the statement, and would continue to be so. At Fairfax, said the statement, "People are more important than machines."

The Company then replied that this had not been meant as a guarantee, and that at the time the company had been unaware of the full implications of the new technology. But the unions then produced the text of a speech by Farrell at a Telecom seminar in February, 1974 - four months prior to Scofford's guarantee. Farrell had stated then that technology was in existence which would allow the complete elimination of typesetting within five years. That is the equipment now being introduced.

Obviously the Company's position was a tissue of lies. Consequently, the unions began to demand iron-clad guarantees.

BOTH SIDES PREPARE FOR ACTION

A Combined Unions Committee was established at Fairfax in mid-1976 uniting not only the printers and the traditionally militant metal workers, but a number of other unions including carpenters and miscellaneous workers.

In the interest of unity, the PKIU allowed itself to be under-represented on this committee. While the PKIU represents some 1100 out of 1500 workers at Fairfax, they have only three representatives on the CUC, two workers and one official. Other unions are represented by one worker and one official each.

The printers' own job organisation is very strong and has a long tradition. Delegates exist in all section, and the Father of the Chapel is guaranteed freedom to do union work at any time. In practice, this virtually keeps him from doing any other work at all.

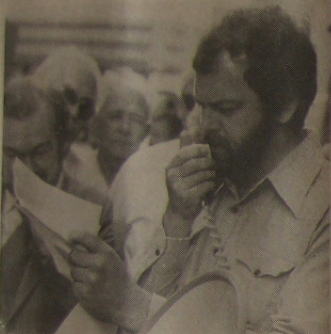
In July, 1976 there had been an important change in the Chapel leadership. The old, conservative leadership of Leo Sommer had been thrown out and replaced by a much more militant team. The new Chapel Father was Don Paget, member of no political group but with a radical outlook, and his Deputy was a spirited young rebel named Ian Joliffe.

In the following months the new rank and file leadership began to prepare for the coming confrontation. Militancy gradually built up in a series of mass meetings and small battles.

The Company, too, began to prepare for battle. The two strongest cards were their technology, and a massive scab force which they maintain at all times. Large numbers of "staff", who are not in the unions, are maintained throughout the building. They are often quite unnecessary in normal times, but they are an automatic strike-breaking army during disputes.

The journalists also marched merrily with the rest of the scab army. In earlier years, the journo had fought together with the printers more than once. During the war, and twice more during the 50's and 60's journalists and printers had struck together and produced their own newspapers. The result was a number of impressive victories.

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HOW THE STRIKE WAS RUN

The heart of the strike was the mass picket, held daily from about 10 to 1. Those were the hours when the mass-circulation Sun was taken out of the building.

The picket showed a number of serious weaknesses. At its height, no more than 300 of the workers appeared to picket. Many, of course, were out doing other things and the size of the picket was an improvement on other strikes. Nevertheless, a larger and more consistent turnout could have made a big difference.

The picketers were not badly organized by comparison with other strikes. But there was still much to be desired. A picket committee had been elected from volunteers, but it turned out to have little idea of what to do, and functioned badly. A new committee had to be put together on the spot. Even then, the picketers seemed to work well only when union organizers or the Chapel leaders were there. When, as often happened, they had to be somewhere else the picket lost its life. Workers hung around idly, waiting for lunch and scarcely harassing the scabs who came in and out.

At some crucial moments, the leadership on the picket line was indecisive. Ten hand-picked militants, organised ahead of time, could have overturned a truck or two in the first week. That would have created a tremendous psychological advantage for the strikers. Yet in weeks of picketing, often of hundreds of people, not a single vehicle was ever overturned.

Later, when the use of the word "scab" and the use of loud-hailers were banned, the organisers were persuaded to defy the ban on shouting the word. But when they had won that point, and could have used the loudhailers with impunity, they failed to do so. No rank and file leader took the initiative on that point.

Even though it failed to stop distribution, however, the picket was still enormously useful. It provided a rallying point for the strikers every day. Impromptu meetings were held, and the workers got a repeated feeling of their collective strength. A wide variety of activities could be organised right there on the street.

The picket provided the best opportunity for supporters to contribute to the strike. Quite a number of students from Sydney, and an equal number of workers from other workplaces, swelled the numbers. They learned the issues, and took the strikers' case back to the general public.

The other vital part of strike organisation was the visits made to other workplaces. Delegations of rank and file workers, some of whom had always had a dim view of Wharfies as 'commos', found themselves on the wharves getting a rousing reception and big contributions of money. The Fairfax metal workers, trading on their union contacts and organisation, raised remarkable amounts of money by

visiting factories. PKIU Chapels at newspapers throughout New South Wales, and in Melbourne, raised many thousands of dollars.

By the end of the struggle, \$114,000 had been raised. For a work force of 1500 that isn't so much, but it did allow the CUC to pay up to \$65 a week to those strikers who were active.

When they visited workplaces, the printing workers took with them their impressive strike paper, the Fairfax Facts. Four issues of this paper appeared, one called the Sin in parody of the Sun. Hundreds of thousands of copies were produced, and they were widely distributed.

As a result, trade unionists through the State understood the issues. There was a groundswell of support throughout industry, and the eventual defeat was a disappointment for far more than the 1500 Fairfax workers.

The key to every aspect of strike organisation was the CUC. This body seemed to meet continually, and did a magnificent job. Unfortunately, it found itself increasingly overworked and overextended. Not only did it have to leave the picket line leaderless far too often, but it had to miss out on other important work for sheer lack of time. Don Paget commented that one reason little was done to mobilise the strikers' wives was the sheer lack of an experienced person available to go out and do the job.

SETBACKS

On October 28, Sir Warwick Fairfax told his Annual Meeting:

"We shall fight it to the finish, and we do it in defence of the press itself, of the Industrial Commission, and of all the citizens of this country."

On that same day, postal workers escalated the struggle to new dimensions by placing a total ban on mail to the Fairfax newspapers. The ban by the APTU was requested by the Combined Unions Committee. At the same time, members of the Telecommunications union banned repairs to telephone and teleprinter equipment. The bans made the struggle a national issue, provoking a hysterical response from the Federal Government.

On November 3, Supreme Court Justice Taylor ordered the APTU to lift the ban. At this stage, 28,600 items were being held (including 3,500 to the Abba Fan Club). Next day, Billy Wentworth told Federal Parliament that the strikers were using 'strong arm operations'. If this situation continued, Australia could become a 'totalitarian dictatorship'.

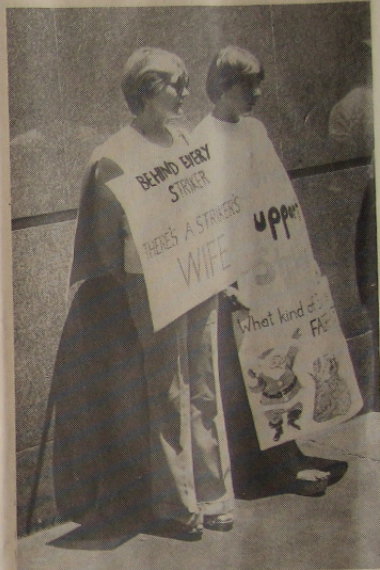
The unions defied the court order, leaving the next move up to Malcolm Fraser. Milton Stevens, State manager of Australia Post, felt caught in the middle. Fearing a confrontation over an issue that had nothing to do with him, he urged the government to keep cool. Meanwhile he told Fairfax, in response to their insistent public demands, that if he personally hauled over their mail "I would cause a riot".

By mid-November the government was swinging into action. In the course of a week ten postal workers were suspended for refusing to handle mail.

About this time, the Combined Unions had a visit from the APTU leaders. The CUC was told in no uncertain terms that the ban had to be lifted. To defend the suspended posties would mean a national strike, which clearly made the APTU officials nervous and which exasperated George Slater, who had opposed the whole thing from the start. More worrying for the officials, they expected that the postal workers themselves would vote to lift the ban the next day.

The CUC had relied on the APTU leadership not only to slap on the ban, but to explain it to their rank and file.

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Wives of workers join the picket lines.

This turned out to be a grave error. No meetings at all were held at the Redfern Mail Exchange. The circulars explaining the issue, produced by the CUC, were still sitting in the union office when a meeting was finally held on November 15.

At that meeting, the officials brought in a face-saving 'request' to lift the bans which they had obtained from the CUC. This kept them from being formally defeated on the question of the bans, but it did not save them from withering attacks from their membership. One right-winger after another got up and appealed to rank and file democracy, then sentiment to attack militant trade unionism and solidarity actions. A number of brave militants spoke against lifting the bans, but they were forced to spend most of their speaking time defending basic trade union principles. APTU officials later saw their own red faces on every television station, admitting that they had been 'chastised' by their rank and file. The press had a field day.

Had the postal workers been consulted from the start, had rank and file links been built between printers and posties as they had been built with wharfies and metal workers, the entire story might have been different. A national postal strike at a point where the government was in serious trouble over other issues could have forced a settlement.

But the CUC relied on the officials, and the opportunity was lost.

OCTOBER 22: THE BATTLE BEGINS

It was a lock-out as much as a strike. In the face of a number of minor stoppages, Fairfax secured from Justice Cahill of the NSW Industrial Commission an order to stop striking. The unions responded with a 24 hour stoppage. The following day, the Company announced that on their return to work they would have to handle work that had been done by staff during the stoppage.

Early in 1975 the Commission had said it was well established that printers did not handle such work. Fairfax's demand that they do so was an obvious attempt to provoke a long strike. The unions recognised this fact, and began to organise mass picketing. What had started as a protest stoppage now became a mass strike for the unions' log of claims.

There were four claims. The Battler summed them up this way:

1. A 35-hour week as the only logical, equitable outcome of the introduction of technological change.
2. There to be a company guarantee of no redundancies as a result of technological change.
3. All basic Medibank deductions to be met by the Company.

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Police assaulting strikers.

the tune of *Solidarity Forever*, insolent grins on their faces. They then held another meeting, flushed with victory. At this stage, union officials could have defied the ban on loudhailers with impunity. But they were too cautious and let the opportunity slip. The workers called repeatedly for files to be ready and willing to step forward and move past their wavering officials. It was one of a number of cases where better rank and file organisation could have made a difference.

In the weeks that followed, there was a steady pattern of police repression. In the course of the strike, there were over twenty arrests. Many of the arrests involved students, as the Company tried to play on the "outside agitator" issue. The CUC deserves full credit for telling the media that they supported the students, and that they had a right to be there.

The police also arrested militant workers. This was a serious problem, for the arrested militants were reluctant to return to the picket line. That made sense at first — why risk victimisation? But as the numbers of arrested workers grew, it meant an increasing vacuum of leadership on the picket line.

By the final weeks of the strike, there was a noticeable slackness on the picket line. A number of devices were used to revive morale, such as a picket of the Company's offices in Hunter Street, but the trend was irreversible. Demoralisation on the picket line, the heart of the strike, translated itself into demoralisation among the whole body of strikers.

PICKETS AND POLICE

For the first week or so, the police took it relatively easy on the picket line. Pickets were able to pound on the side of trucks, and even try to overturn them, without much action from the cops. From time to time, they marched along the line of waiting scab cars and trucks, harassing the drivers and clearly scaring them. At one point, a cop was obliged to climb in next to one frightened driver and comfort him.

But as it became clear that the picket was having some effect, the police became more aggressive. This seemed to coincide with a pointed question asked in State Parliament by Liberal leader Eric Willis, who suggested that Neville Wran replied that there had been no instruction either way. But a nod was as good as a wink to the police force.

One of the most effective picket tactics had involved loudhailers, used mainly to shout abuse at scabs. Who could ever forget the relentless voice of Ian Jolliffe:

"You're nothing but a foul scab, the lowest form of life, the foul scappings of the human barrel. How can you stand there and be insulted."

By the middle of November, several other loudhailers had appeared, and Editorial Manager Graeme Wilkinson found himself faced one day with four pickets who surrounded him, and blared the word "scab" into his ears as he directed cars into the loading bays.

At this the company took fright. An editorial appeared in the *Sydney Morning Herald* demanding that the police act against the loudhailers. The police followed these instructions. They informed picketers that they must stop using the word "scab". Loudhailers were banned.

The printing workers were taken aback at first. "You nasty man!" they shouted derisively. But after a meeting they voted to force the issue. One hundred and fifty pickets marched in a circle in front of the loading bays, chanting the word "scab" in unison. The police were stymied. They stood around looking stupid and made only one arrest during an hour and a half of chanting. The pickets began singing "Scabs are working at the Herald" to

DUCKER INTERVENES

The NSW Labor Council is popularly known as the "Graveyard of Disputes". Yet the strikers had expected from the beginning to have to bring the Labor Council, and



Police arresting militant workers.

Godfather John Ducker, into the struggle eventually.

Their viewpoint was not entirely irrational. When a settlement is near anyway, bringing in an "outside arbitrator" to formalise it can be a good way of saving face on both sides. This is a normal and understandable aspect of negotiation. But from the moment he was brought in, Ducker brought the smell of betrayal with him.

When he contacted management in early December, they asked to see him alone. He knew the strikers would react violently to such a thing, so he insisted that officials from each union go along. But no rank and file delegates were to attend, though they were the day to day leadership of the strike. The CUC was hardly pleased, but agreed not to obstruct the meeting. But they assembled at the Fairfax building when the delegation arrived, and yelled "no sell-outs, mate!" at Ducker to make their feelings crystal clear.

Ducker had no power to resolve the dispute. But he had a lot of influence over the union officials. In exchange for a Company offer to withdraw deregistration proceedings it had begun, the officials agreed to raise the idea of a return to work with the CUC.

Accounts differ of what was agreed. Fairfax claimed that PKTU Secretary Frank Kelly had agreed to recommend a return to work. Kelly more or less denied this later, in a waffly speech at Wentworth Park. But there is no doubt John Ducker felt he had things under control as he boarded a plane for Melbourne to attend a meeting of the ACTU executive.

However, a CUC meeting angrily rejected any talk of ending the dispute. Their recommendation to stay out was carried at the next mass meeting by three or four to one. The *Sydney Morning Herald* published a "we wuz robbed" editorial.

But the vote was nothing like the ten-to-one margin of a fortnight before. And it was at this stage that an organised back-to-work movement began to appear, with some 60 workers deliberately organised to sit in front of the microphones and form a cheer section for right wing speakers.

Moreover, the events of the previous days had made it clear that Kelly and most other officials were beginning to waver.

THE STRIKE CRUMBLES

On hearing of the vote, John Ducker resolved to intervene more forcefully. The same mass meeting had called for a total union black ban on Fairfax, a ban which could only be officially imposed by the Labor Council. He used this fact to bring himself into the centre of the dispute.

He knew morale was weakening. Led by Leo Sommer, former Father of the Chapel, a group who had never been seen on the picket before suddenly appeared circulating a petition calling for a return to work. It was clear that lobbying was going on behind the scenes.

Ducker set out to manipulate the demoralisation. He wrote letters to the heads of the unions who were still working at Fairfax, as these were the ones who would be affected by any black ban. Since these were unions like the AJA and the Federated Clerks, he quite predictably got a dismal response or no response at all. No effort was made to reach the members of these unions. Then, armed with a stack of discouraging replies to his letters, prepared to address a mass meeting on 16 December.

He had one minor concession to point to. The Company's dubious guarantees on job security had originally applied only to employees hired before a certain date. Fairfax now agreed to extend them to all employees. It was a pathetic concession, but Ducker knew it would be seized upon by many demoralised workers as a rationalisa-

THE STRUGGLE AT FAIRFAX



"The Fair Facts" — one of several issues put out by the combined unions committee.

tion for returning to work.

Ducker made a masterful speech. A total black ban was "just not on", he told the meeting. The other unions would not be in it — and it would be undemocratic to force them. As if the Labor Council had no power to stop scabbing by right wing unions!

The concession on job security was an "important victory to be recognised and built on, and shoved down the throat of every boss".

Now Frank Kelly spoke and added to the gloom. Ducker had done a wonderful job, got all that he could get for the workers. The settlement Kelly had rejected eight days earlier, he now pointed as a famous victory. Faced with the collapse of their officials and Ducker's manoeuvres, the mood of the meeting hardened. Militants got jeered when they suggested the strike could still be won. The vote to go back was not even close.

Gloomy CUC members met briefly, and went off to negotiate the return to work. Some angry militants refused to disquit to wear CUC badges, though they were persuaded in the end. One veteran trade unionist and former Chapel Worker looked around with agony in his face. "Eight weeks for nothing. I could have had a holiday!"

WHAT NOW?

Was it all for nothing? It seemed like it in those moments of despair. But looking back on it now, things look brighter to most of the strike leaders. The concession on permanency was a tangible achievement, however small. But the most important achievements are the intangible ones.

Don Paget told the *Battler*: "We didn't gain what we hoped, but the Company didn't gain anything at all. They spent millions to break us, but our organisation is as strong as ever. The blokes wouldn't want another long strike, of course, but they are not reluctant to knock off."

The unions were tested almost immediately after the return to work. A stereotype was sacked, but quick more tests and many stoppages.

Another important achievement is the new strength of the Combined Unions Committee. Among printing and metal workers especially, the CUC has increased its standing as a leadership body.

The workers' view of the world is greatly changed. As Ernie Fairbrother, who organised collections of money on the wharves, told a meeting: "A lot of us, and I was one of

THE STRUGGLE AT FAIRFAX

them, used to talk about the wharves as stirrers and cosmos. Now I see things differently." After some initial hesitation, the strikers accepted radical students and the left wing newspapers as a natural part of their picket line and their struggle.

Finally, and most crucial for the future, the militants see the need for rank and file action independent of the officials. The collapse of the postal bans taught them that.

DON'T MOURN — ORGANISE!

The big question is whether the insights can be turned into organisation.

Ways must be found to pull the dozens of experienced militants together into an on going rank and file organisation, so that the next time the official leadership begins to get weak in the knees a new, unofficial leadership exists to take the struggle beyond them.

The desperately needed links to the rank and file of other unions and workplaces — to the News Ltd. printers, postal workers, metal workers and the wharves — have to be built now.

Now that the limitations of Wran are obvious to every Fairfax militant, the question of politics cannot be avoided either. The need for a new kind of politics and a new kind of workers' party is something that begins to have immediate relevance.

The first step could be the publication of a rank and file bulletin. The existing chapel newsletter can be used to some degree to discuss these questions, but what is urgently needed is a publication that is the property of the militants. As links are established to militants in other areas, it could be distributed there too.

OCCUPATION

The first thought that came to the various left-wingers who came to support the picket was an occupation of the building. Given the mood among the membership at the start of the strike, such an idea might have met little response. But after the experience of an eight week strike, and the radicalisation of a section of the workers, it is something that should be urgently considered next time.

There was a brief occupation of sorts in 1975, when the workers had been declared "on strike" by management but refused to go home. It proved difficult to extend the occupation beyond the regular shift time. But the experience will have helped to legitimise the idea among the workers, and provided some idea of how it could work.

An occupation would probably eliminate any danger of police intervention, given the immense value of the machinery the workers would be sitting on. It would ensure that no papers would appear. It should also make it easier to keep the majority of strikers together and involved, and so less open to influence by the fifth column represented by Leo Sommer.

CONCLUSION

The Fairfax strike was an impressive struggle, but it was a great tragedy, for it could have been won. What was needed was a consistently militant leadership and reliable support from other unions. Neither of these can be ensured until rank and file militants organise to the point where they are no longer dependent on the full-time officials.

For eight weeks the Fairfax strikers were an inspiration to the trade union movement. The aim of this article, for all its critical remarks, is to make sure that the inspiration — and the lessons — are not lost.



The Struggle in Southern Africa

by MICK ARMSTRONG

The apartheid regime in South Africa (Azania) is the wealthiest and the most powerful militarily in Africa. Its industrial might and massive mineral wealth allow it to economically dominate the whole southern part of the continent. The surrounding black states are forced to reach some kind of accommodation with Pretoria.

In recent years, the Vorster government in South Africa and its imperialist backers in Britain and the US have developed a strategy of detente with the surrounding black states. This detente strategy is an attempt to prevent the national liberation struggles which have driven the Portuguese out of Mozambique and Angola, from spreading further south.

The deepening international economic crisis has hit the black states severely, and driven them further into Vorster's hands. In particular, the Zambian economy has been almost ruined by the massive fall in the price of copper, on which it is so heavily dependent, and by a series of bad harvests. This has led to industrial unrest, predominantly among miners, which has shaken the Zambian ruling class.

At the same time the South Africans have much to gain by opening up new markets for their cars, mining machinery and textiles, markets previously closed to them by the confrontation with black Africa.

The historic meeting at Victoria Falls in August 1975 between Kenneth Kaunda and John Vorster was a symbol of this new accommodation. In return for economic aid and increased trade with South Africa, Kaunda's regime and Julius Nyerere's in Tanzania are being used to control the national liberation struggles in Zimbabwe (Rhodesia) and Namibia (South West Africa) and to legitimise the Vorster regime.

Even the governments of Angola and Mozambique, which many people on the left believe are progressive and even socialist, have been forced into some degree of accom-

modation with Vorster. Mozambique is dependent on the gold payments it gets for the 100,000 Mozambicans who slave in the mines of South Africa. Its port of Cam Phumo (formerly Lourenco Marques) depends heavily on South African trade and the huge Cabora Bassa project will supply power to South Africa.

Until this stranglehold is broken there can be no successful socialist revolution in Southern Africa. There is one force capable of breaking it — the millions of black workers in the mines and factories of South Africa itself.

NO GUERRILLA ROAD

Within South Africa itself, two strategies for revolution could be considered: an armed insurrection by the black workers in the cities, backed by a general strike, or guerrilla strategies in the rural areas.

It seems extremely unlikely that apartheid can be overthrown by the traditional methods of guerrilla struggle used successfully in Mozambique and Angola.

Firstly, there is the military muscle of the Vorster regime, with as much fire-power as all of black Africa put together. The three million-odd whites in South Africa are capable of sustaining a much longer fight than the tiny white populations of Zimbabwe or Angola. Even the intervention of significant numbers of foreign troops (like the Cubans in Angola) is unlikely to swing the balance.

It will be extremely difficult to set up liberated zones inside South Africa itself, given the inhospitable terrain for guerrilla fighters (in particular, the absence of large forest or mountain areas) and the fairly closely settled countryside. At the same time, the whole thrust of the detente strategy is to prevent the neighbouring black states from providing external bases for any guerrillas.



BLACK POLITICAL ORGANISATIONS

The traditional black nationalist organisation in South Africa has been the African National Congress (ANC) which has been closely linked with the predominantly white Communist Party. It has a reformist perspective of liberalising the apartheid regime to achieve a multi-racial society. The Russians have provided it with significant financial support and it follows Moscow's every whim. The ANC's claims to have led the uprisings in Soweto should be treated with great scepticism. Its support inside the country appears to be on the decline. Many of its leaders are now quite old and most of the young militants who have fled South Africa in the wake of Soweto have disowned the ANC.

A more militant breakaway in 1959 formed the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) which has been influenced by Maoist ideas. The PAC has played a significant role in the development of the "black consciousness" movement and has gained the support of many of the younger militants. Organisations such as the South African Students' Organisation (SASO), the Black People's Convention and the Black Allied Workers' Union have been in the forefront of the black consciousness movement. This movement has called for a distinctive black awareness and rejection of white value systems. It has placed much emphasis on the building of separate black organisations, independent of the white liberals and Communists who have previously dominated the liberation movements.

The Black Consciousness Movement has played an important role in the reconstruction of resistance after the repression of the early sixties. The Soweto uprisings are

evidence that it has widespread support.

THE WHITES

Most white workers are confined to the highly paid white collar sector and within industry to supervisory positions. With wages of between six and twenty times those of black workers, they have been effectively bought off by the apartheid regime.

While there was some history of class struggle by white workers before the second World War, the white unions which now exist serve to maintain the privileged positions of the whites relative to black workers.

Of course, some whites will come to support black workers in their struggle, but there is no reason why this will occur on a class basis. Rather white support is more likely to come from dissatisfied members of the middle classes — intellectuals and students.

THE APARTHEID ECONOMY

The apartheid regime has been badly hit by the current recession. Prices for gold and other mineral exports have fallen and there has been a cutback in foreign investment. The Soweto uprisings have further shaken the confidence of British and American investors who dominate the African economy. After the Sharpeville massacre in March 1960, there was a massive fall-off in foreign investment, and Vorster must be worried that the new unrest will have the same effect.

The unique nature of the apartheid regime also leads to particular difficulties which are not present in other

western capitalist economies. The Afrikaner nationalist governments have attempted to prevent the development of an urban black proletariat. The black working class was turned into an unskilled migrant labour force. Costs were cut by forcing workers' families to live off rural agriculture in the rural "homelands" and the movements of black workers in the towns were tightly controlled.

This policy has led to a chronic shortage of skilled labour and low productivity. The major employers have either attempted to change the apartheid laws, which limit the ability of blacks to obtain the skills increasingly demanded by a modern economy, or evaded them to some extent. As a result, an ideological crisis has developed within the white community over how far apartheid can be modified.

There is little chance that the South African economy will return to the rapid growth of the sixties and early seventies. Recession combined with inflation, the twin characteristics of the world economic crisis, will continue, and that will lead to greater convulsions within the black working class.

In early 1973 a wave of strikes swept through Natal and they were followed by continual unrest among mine-workers. More recently there has been repeated rioting among black youth. Out of these struggles could emerge the leadership not only of the black workers' movement, but of the exploited masses of southern Africa as a whole.

ZIMBABWE

The clearest example of Voster's detente strategy in action can be seen in Zimbabwe. Under the pressure of South Africa and US and British imperialism, the front line states (Zambia, Tanzania, Botswana, Mozambique) have intervened repeatedly in Zimbabwe liberation movements.

The fortunately ill-fated Geneva talks were but a recent example of detente in action. It was only because the Smith government was unwilling to make concessions acceptable even to the likes of Kaunda that the talks broke down.

The front line states hold significant power over the liberation movements. They provide the only secure bases from which guerrillas can operate. They control to a large extent the arms, equipment, food and medical supplies. Thus even the most militant Zimbabwean nationalists must bow to their wishes to some extent.

In a crunch the front line states are prepared to use their armed forces to smash the guerrilla movement. In Zambia in late 1974, as part of a deal with Vorster, Kaunda almost wiped out ZANU's guerrilla forces. He played one faction inside ZANU off against another and then imprisoned the leadership of the winning faction.

The recent formation of the Patriotic Front between Joshua Nkomo of ZAPU and Robert Mugabe of ZANU owes much to the pressure of the front line states and brought them, imperialism. The fact that the freedom fighters are isolated in the camps from the masses of Zimbabwe peasants and workers makes them even more susceptible to the pressures of imperialism expressed through the front line states.

THE LIBERATION MOVEMENTS

The Zimbabwe nationalists are severely divided into a number of competing factions. It is difficult to determine

accurately the support which each of the various external political leaders enjoys within the guerrilla camps and within Zimbabwe itself.

Until recent years the two major nationalist organisations were the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU) led by Joshua Nkomo and the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU). Nkomo was originally backed by Zambia and Russia and he is now the favourite of imperialism to become the first black president of a neo-colonial Zimbabwe. Even the white Rhodesian settlers have come to look on "Josh" with some sympathy.

Unfortunately for Nkomo, ZAPU only commands the support of a small section (about 5%) of the guerrilla forces, though some recent reports indicate it is recruiting quite heavily. This lack of military muscle gives Nkomo little room to manoeuvre and increases his dependence on imperialism and the front line states.

Since the assassination of ZANU Chairman Herbert Chitepo in March 1975, ZANU has been plagued by internal divisions. While Robert Mugabe, its current political spokesman, claims to have the backing of 90% of the guerrilla fighters, it is clear that there was substantial opposition in the camps in Mozambique to his participation in the Geneva talks.² Armed clashes are even reported to have occurred between Mugabe supporters and those opposed to negotiations.

Inside Zimbabwe the massive demonstrations which welcomed Bishop Muzorewa³ on his visit clearly showed there was massive opposition to the Geneva talks and to any deals with the white settler government. Muzorewa is now in the process of establishing his own guerrilla force.

Socialists stand for unconditional support to all groups which carry out the armed struggle against the Smith regime. However, we make it quite clear that under the present nationalist leaderships the liberation struggle cannot overthrow capitalism in Zimbabwe, or inflict a decisive defeat on imperialism.

The commitment to armed struggle in itself is not sufficient to distinguish reformists from revolutionary socialists. Even Joshua Nkomo is moved to engage in armed struggle when he can get what he wants from Ian Smith at the conference table. The more militant leaders adopt the Maoist/Stalinist concept of a multi-class bloc in the struggle for a "national-democratic revolution" in which the working class would be but one element. They look forward to what they describe as a socialist Zimbabwe, but by that they mean a state capitalist regime, in which power would not rest with the working class but with the petty bourgeoisie which the nationalists represent.

Unless the struggle in Zimbabwe can be linked with the struggle of black workers in South Africa, a neo-colonial regime along the lines of Kaunda's in Zambia or at best like Machel's in Mozambique is inevitable.

FOOTNOTES

1. The Black Consciousness Movement has rejected the term "non-white" and uses the term "blacks" to describe African, Coloured and Asian (predominantly Indian in South Africa).
2. The other significant ZANU faction is headed by Ndbanangsi Sithole, its founding president.
3. Muzorewa is a leader of the African National Council. The enlarged African National Council was established, under pressure from the front line states in 1974, in an attempt to unite ZAPU, ZANU, the old ANC and Froilizi (a small splinter group). This umbrella organisation was stillborn at the beginning. Nkomo attempted to take over the organisation and obtain a separate settlement with Ian Smith. He was opposed by Muzorewa and Sithole.

Radical Feminism - a Critique

by Janey Stone. From I.S. Books, 40 cents.

This is a minor classic. Although it was originally produced in only a few hundred poorly mimeographed copies, it had a considerable impact on Melbourne women's liberationists. It is good to have it back in print, and in a readable format, after two years when it was quite unobtainable.

What is radical feminism? "... the theory that women's oppression is the fundamental political oppression, that women are a class and that they are engaged in a power struggle with men." Such a theory depends heavily on psychological and sociological theories, since it clashes with any economic definition of class.

The theory is obviously in conflict with Marxism. Yet it shows its weakness immediately by having to borrow its terminology from Marx. Calling women a class is not analysis but analogy. There is an alternative idea that treats women as a nation, their bodies being their territory. This too is mere analogy.

Class or nation, the radical feminist thesis is that all women are in a unit against all men. Consequently the theory concentrates on attempting to discover the basis on which they can unite - to all work out what it is that all women have in common.

Since the theory is weakest on its economic side, the search leads into psychological and cultural areas. The most painfully telling part of the pamphlet is the account of the attempts to identify a female culture.

"... which amounts to

the only thing that does cut across all class, race and national lines for women: the female.

Moreover, it is the role as perceived by white, middle-class, Western, young twentieth century women."

As one radical feminist writes: "For me female culture is my 84 year old grandmother serving tea, Charlotte, Elizabeth Arden make-up, lace underpants, Anais Nin and tamtax - I want to dig for my identity within the culture."

Similarly, in the psychological sphere, the unifying characteristics turn out to be the traditional "feminine virtues":

"Women are organic - feminists are natural ecologists. ... women have kept more in touch with the idea that all energy is sexual, and that sexual doesn't mean genital."

It is only a short step further to conclude that women are superior to men, as some radical feminists actually do. But if the existing female role is superior, it can only follow that women are not oppressed at all. And indeed, radical feminists have come perilously close to saying so. Here is what one has written on the Victorian family:

"Women may have been excluded from activities in the world outside the home, but inside it they were powerful and in a majority - married or single, women collectively controlled and dominated domestic rituals and supervised the drama of life and death."

This kind of wishful thinking is typical of a movement in decline, one which senses its own weakness. Certainly it is true that the movement today is stagnant. As the author

shows in her new introduction, there is a widespread feeling that the movement has reached an impasse.

But if radical feminism is at a dead end, it is still true that the radical feminists themselves are some of the most militant and courageous fighters around. It is up to Marxists not only to criticise, but to convince them of the viability of our alternatives. In this regard, Janey Stone's conclusion is disappointing:

"We need to really understand consciousness, which the radical feminists, for all their obsession with it, clearly do not. Consciousness is changed in the process of people struggling to change society ... and themselves."

That is vague to say the least. She did write a paper on strategy for the women's movement soon after this article was published, but it would seem dated today. Something new and constructive needs to be written.

Tom O'Lincain.

Gramsci's Marxism

by Carl Boggs, London Pluto Press, 1976. \$4.50

Althusser's Marxism

by Alex Callinicos, London, Pluto Press, 1976. \$4.50

Over the past few years there has been a revival of interest in Marxist Phil-

osophy. The French philosopher Louis Althusser, who is still developing his ideas, has a large following in several countries.

Interest has grown too, in the Italian Antonio Gramsci, a major founding figure of the Italian Communist Party, and one of the most original of modern Marxist writers.

Although the books by Boggs and Callinicos are critical assessments of the two writers, they also serve quite well as introductions. They will be welcomed by people beginning to read Gramsci, whose extensive work is not always clearly organised, or Althusser, who is often extremely difficult to read (at least for us prosaic Anglo-Saxons).

Boggs points out that Gramsci's work covers a long period, falling into stages, from his involvement in the Turin workers' movement and the Italian Socialist Party, through the setting up of the Communist Party to his long imprisonment under the Fascists (1926-1937) when the Prison Notebooks were produced. The range of his writings includes history, education, culture, the theory of the state, the position of women, and Catholicism - all approached with the idea of developing Marxist theory applicable to the conditions of advanced capitalism.

Gramsci's leading idea is that revolutionary struggle, especially in early stages, is more than anything else an ideological process. He doesn't deny that the dominant mode of production in the economy is what gives history its general shape in the long run, but opposes any simple view of the "superstructure" of the economic base. (A common error of his time). While politics, ideas, religion and culture may not be "autonomous" they may be overriding forces in a transitional period.

Gramsci speaks of the ruling class's ideological

"hegemony": under capitalism, our minds are all conditioned by ideas that serve the interest of the capitalist. A revolution would require a change in the consciousness of the working class. To achieve this, socialists have to create a "counter-hegemony" and strip away the mystifications of capitalist ideology. This will not bring about socialism, but only then can we advance towards socialism.

Since consciousness is a concrete political force, the ideological struggle cannot be separated from real political conflict. It is to be led by the revolutionary party. Boggs describes Gramsci's view of the party as an extension of Lenin's, with a solid dose of Machiavelli. (Some of Boggs's ideas on Lenin could be questioned).

The party is the "modern prince", capable of understanding the forces of history, and mobilising the masses as a coherent force for change.

"What Gramsci outlined was neither an anarchistic spontaneous mass movement nor an elite party that would be an exclusive repository of consciousness, but a synthesis of the two - an organic linkage between elite and mass, the organic and the spontaneous, the planned element and the vital impulse."

Gramsci's view that all human beings are in a fundamental sense philosophers and intellectuals is also a central notion in Althusser's philosophy. Like Gramsci, Althusser is concerned with the role of ideology in society - especially in the social production of ideas and workers' theories - eg by scientists.

Althusser thinks it is vitally important to develop scientific Marxist concepts to have theory applicable to the workers' movement - unlike Gramsci, who thought science had been overrated. To do this, according to Althusser, we must read

and understand Marx's work in a particular way. That is, what Althusser regards as a Marxist way! Hence his famous thesis that there is a "break" between the early ("humanist") Marx and the late (more "scientific") Marx of Capital. (See Althusser and Balibar, Reading Capital).

Callinicos carefully explains the main problems and issues in theory of knowledge and philosophy of science that must be confronted by the Althusserian position.

However, his main objective is to assess Althusser as Althusser demands to be assessed - as a Marxist. Thus Althusser is placed in his context in the Marxist tradition, and an attempt made to determine his contribution to that tradition. Callinicos's attitude towards Althusser

"... combines sufficient respect for his work to want to make sense of it as a whole and over time, and sufficient restlessness, particularly at the political level, to wish to disentangle the errors it contains."

His conclusion is that while Althusser has made significant contributions to Marxism, his overall position is not one that can be held by a consistent revolutionary.

Althusser's theory of ideology, though it contains some confusions, is of great importance, as is his critique of bourgeois (especially empiricist) epistemology (theory of knowledge). Especially useful is his account of the ISAs (ideological state apparatuses) - schools, churches, the law, the family, trade unions, the political system and the media. (See Lenin and Other Essays).

Nevertheless, Callinicos demonstrates, Althusser fails to discuss the central problem of Marxist politics - the unity of theory and practice. This omission is striking for one so

interested in ideology, and reflects Althusser's own political role in the French Communist Party. For to discuss the unity of theory and practice means posing the question of the revolutionary party, and "criticising, understanding and rejecting the reformism of the western Communist Parties and the state capitalist bureaucracies of the eastern Communist parties. This is something Althusser is not prepared to do."

Both Gramsci and Althusser are led, finally into serious philosophical difficulties. (They are not alone in that!) But, in Callinicos's opinion, Gramsci's philosophy does not lead him into any major political errors. The same cannot be said of Althusser.

Jim Walker.

Family

by Pa Chin. Double Day, New York. \$2.95

Pa Chin was an anarchist, who participated in many of the turbulent events which shook China in this century. He had grown up in a wealthy traditional family. The 50 servants formed a tight and rigid community, each person with a predetermined role, and ruled by the despotic grandfather.

Pa Chin became an anarchist because he wanted to "sacrifice himself for the happiness of humanity". The twin ideas of sacrifice and happiness form the theme of his novel, work, Family, a novel based on his own experiences. The novel is about the need for sacrifice in the fight against the right to personal happiness: to freely choose a marriage partner, to consider living individ-

ual needs ahead of dead ritual, to free choice of lifestyle.

But there is a conflict between the need to sacrifice and the desire for happiness. This conflict is studied in the novel as three brothers and their friends work out solutions to their problems during the early 20's.

The Kao family is large and wealthy: four generations live together under one roof. Superficially everything is harmonious and traditionally correct. But under a little pressure the surface cracks to reveal brutality, cowardice and immorality. The oldest brother takes on the burden of caring for the family at his father's death bed. Although he has been somewhat influenced by the radical literature of the New Culture Movement, he feels that to survive one could not resist outwardly but rather agree with ones adversaries and receive their statements with a bow. This philosophy of "complaint bows" seems to him the best way to keep the peace.

The consequences are horrifying. By outwardly agreeing with the most powerful members of the family his is forced to become their instrument in hurting not just his brothers, whom he loves, but also himself. He is prevented from marrying the woman he loves, and when he comes to love the wife of his arranged marriage he loses her too. Despite his efforts and sacrifice his own family breaks up.

The second brother is determined not to repeat his older brother's fate, and he fights for his right to marry the girl of his choice. Chueh-min's struggle is not easy, but eventually he wins and achieves a personal solution.

His girl friend Chin is also involved in a struggle. The movement among middle class women to free themselves had a massive impact on those days. More tightly squashed

REVIEWS

ed into their roles than their feet were squashed into traditional bindings, they appear to Chin as sacrificial victims. "They were all tied and handcuffed and driven to this road, and made to kneel there, to soak the earth with their blood and tears."

Chin and her friends declare, "I will not take that road. I want to be a human being, like a man." Their action, symbolic perhaps but potent, is to cut their hair. It took a great deal of courage to face the jeers and insults in the streets: "hide men" or "duck's behind". They felt that the sacrifice was necessary for the happiness of their "millitudes of sisters of the future".

Chieh-hui, the youngest brother, is a more complicated case. He is in love with a bondmaid, a family slave. To marry her would mean a major sacrifice, for his whole family and most of his friends would disown him. His dilemma reaches a critical point when he discovers she is to be sent to be a rich old man's concubine.

Chieh-hui doesn't live only in personal world. He is active in the student movement, part of the New Culture Movement, and involved in putting out a magazine. He feels suffocated in the stifling family atmosphere until he finally breaks free.

Chieh-hui never really resolves the contradiction between sacrifice and personal happiness. The best he is able to do is achieve an essential pre-requisite for his personal development — to break from his family.

Pa Chin himself seems to have suffered from the same contradiction.

Alexander Berkman, whose anarchist writings influenced him, once remarked: "A good anarchist is one who lives only for the Cause, and gives everything to it." But Pa Chin was also influenced from quite different sources. His characters read Turgenev: "It's the thirst for love, for happiness, nothing else. We're

young, we are not monsters, not fools. We'll conquer happiness for ourselves."

In January, 1927 just a few months before the city was gripped by a workers' uprising, he left Shanghai for Paris. Though he continued to participate in anarchist discussions, his main contribution from then on was his novels which were influential among the Chinese youth of the 30's and 40's. Unable to resolve the contradiction between sacrifice and the search for happiness in his own life, he wrestled with it in fiction.

After the Maoist victory in 1949, Pa Chin was accepted as a "progressive" writer "inspired by anti-imperialist and anti-feudal democratic thought". He seems to have practiced the philosophy of "complaint bows" with the regime, and even went so far as "revising" his works to remove any hints of anarchist tendencies. He even did this with his autobiographical works.

During the Cultural Revolution he came under heavy attack. His writings were banned, and even burned. A gang of thugs ransacked his house and destroyed his library and art objects. Not long after, he was dragged to the People's Stadium of Shanghai.

There he was forced to kneel on broken glass and listen to shouts accusing him as a traitor and enemy of Mao. Subsequently he was "sent to labour for re education."

Family is a fascinating picture of the life of the middle class of the period. Anyone interested in China shouldn't miss out on it. It's available from Third World Bookshops in Melbourne and Sydney.

Janey Stone.

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