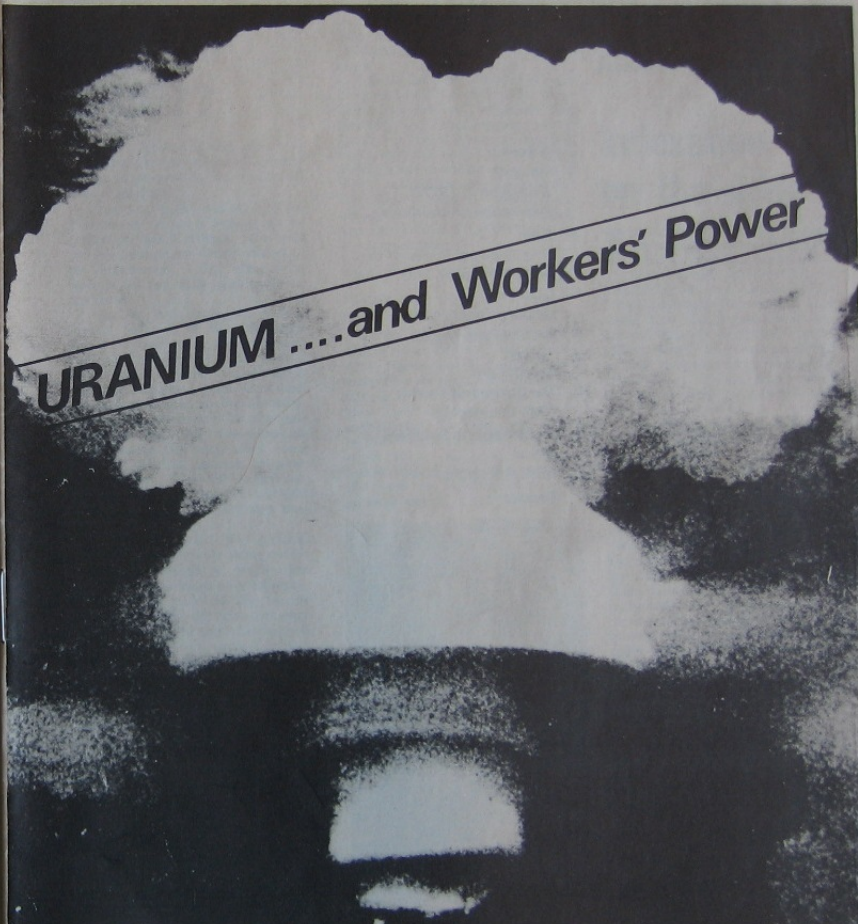


FRONT LINE

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URANIUMand Workers' Power

MAGAZINE OF THE INTERNATIONAL SOCIALISTS

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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 refuelers 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 the 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 leaders 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



P.M. Bhutto

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 coddled 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 loans 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 Muallim 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 Townshend.

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 usefull. 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

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.

INTERNATIONAL SOCIALISM JOURNAL

Monthly journal of the International Socialists in Britain. Single copies 75 cents (30c p&p). Subscription rates on application.



THE HAZARDS OF WORK by Patrick Kinnersley. \$2-25 (60c p&p)
The most complete book dealing with all aspects of safety at work — designed for use on the shop floor.

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)

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 held a partial victory when the government announced the Fox Enquiry into uranium exports. For the next 18 months the anti-

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 uranium. In March 1975 the Queensland AMWU and the AMWU said it would ban uranium mining if it got enough public support. In August the Queensland Trades and Labour Council black banned uranium mining.

On the face of it the greenies 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 Lichad 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, the AWU and the Eperton machine in the Queensland TLC 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.² 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 from the start and was going to recommend that mining proceed seemed ridiculous. However, the meeting in its wisdom instructed FOE to continue in the enquiry.

The meeting's one 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 their 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.

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 work 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, Ranser 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 Ranser 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



ANATOMY OF A STRIKE
by Tom O'Lincoln

THE STRUGGLE AT FAIRFAX

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 compositor 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. Scotford 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.

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 Scotford'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.

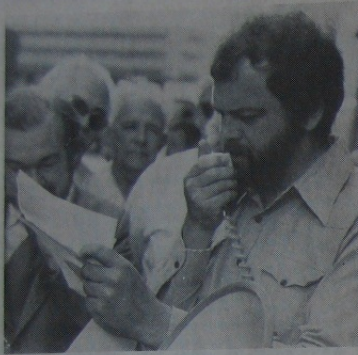
The printers' own job organisation is very strong and has a long tradition. Delegates exist in all section, and the Father of the Chapel is guaranteed freedom to do union work at any time. In practice, this virtually keeps him from doing any other work at all.

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 Jolliffe.

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. Their 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.



HOW THE STRIKE WAS RUN

4. A \$20 wage increase to all members of the Combined Unions.

While the Fairfax papers made much of the other three claims, the attention of the strikers was riveted to the demand for job security. The Company insisted that its ambiguous statements satisfied the demand, and put its strikers' obstinance down to 'irresponsible unionism' - occasionally hinting at connections between Don Paget and the Communist Party.

At the outset, virtually no one expected a really prolonged strike. Militants agree that, had anyone proposed an eight week stoppage to a mass meeting in October, it would have been overwhelmingly rejected. Ian Jolliffe commented that 'When I was asked at the start how long we'd stay out, I said we'd last about a week.'

But once underway, the strike gained momentum very rapidly.

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 'commons', 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 *Fair 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 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.

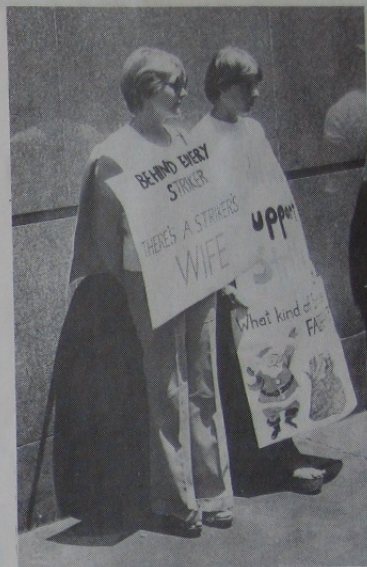
On November 3, Supreme Court Justice Taylor ordered the APTU to lift the ban. At this stage, 28,600 items were held at (including 3,500 to the Abba Fan Club). Next day, Billy Wentworth told Federal Parliament that the strikers were using 'strong arm operations'. If this situation continued, Australia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



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 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.



Police assaulting 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 was instructing the police to 'turn a blind eye'. 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 scrapings 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". Loud-hailers 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

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 someone to use a loudhailer, yet no group of rank and file was 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.

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 keep 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 PKIU 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.

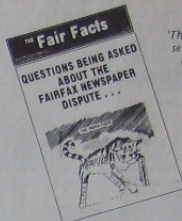
THE STRIKE CRUMBLES

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 by 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 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 unempowering 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 painted 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 now. 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 in disgust to wear CUC badges, though they were persuaded in the end. One veteran trade unionist and former Chapel Father 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 permanent 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 action won their reinstatement. Since then there have been 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

them, used to talk about the wharves as stirrers and commos. 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.



BRIEFING
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 overturned 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"¹ 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 attempted to develop a distinctive black awareness and called for the 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 the British and American investors who dominate the South 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 evident 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 cut by forcing workers' families to live off tribal 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 through 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 Ndabaningi 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 Frolizi (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.B. 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 to unite against all men. Consequently the theory concentrates on attempting to discover the basis on which they can unite — to which they can unite — to 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 role. 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 sewing tea, Charlotte, Elizabeth Arden make-up, lace underpants, Anais Nin and lampax — 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 dramas 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 criticize, 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'Lincoln.

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" as a mere "reflection" 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 which 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 Gramsci's ideas on Lenin could be questioned. The party is the "modern prairie", capable of understanding the course 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 organised and the spontaneous, the planned impulse 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 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 — 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 reservations, 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, the 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 Philosophy 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 the 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 family members and 45 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 master work, Family, a novel based on his own experiences. The novel is about the need for sacrifice in the fight against oppressive traditions, and 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 should 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.

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: "little men" or "duck's behind". They felt that the sacrifice was necessary for the happiness of their "multitudes of sisters of the future".

Chuih-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.

Chueh-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.

Chueh-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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