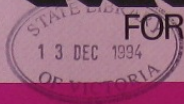


Labor combined with SOCIALIST FIGHT MILITANT

FOR WORKERS' POWER AND SOCIALISM

Volume 4, Number 3 May, 1984



Peace marchers challenge Hawke

Social Rights Conference

Broad opposition to Accord

'Australia should aid Nicaragua'

Eyewitness report by Peter Milton

Philippines election boycott

How Australia aids Marcos regime



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Labor MILITANT

At the beginning of this year Labor Militant amalgamated with Socialist Fight.

Both these journals have been circulating in the Party for about three years. And they both had the same basic aims: to promote the discussion of socialist ideas and to contribute towards the construction of a broad, socialist current.

While the amalgamation of our journals may be viewed as a modest step towards the creation of such a current, we believe it is a significant one for the following reasons:

1) Our combined publication will be the only one in the Party with a national scope and distribution. It will draw together information and ideas from a wide range of sources;

2) By combining our resources we can improve the quality of our articles, the range of issues covered, and the distribution of the finished product;

3) This amalgamation demonstrates that we are serious about building a strong Left current.

An important aspect of the new Labor Militant is the opening up of a number of pages for debates. In these pages we hope to reflect discussion that is taking place in the Party around key issues. We invite contributions from those in the Left who have different viewpoints to those expressed by supporters of Labor Militant and Socialist Fight.

We also encourage contributions in the form of letters and reviews to make our journal more lively and stimulating.

We also want Labor Militant to be a useful guide for activists in the ALP. For that reason we will continue to carry contributions by organisations and committees that are campaigning around particular issues, and we will focus on what we think can be done within the Party.

The new Labor Militant will continue to campaign against the Prices and Incomes Accord. This has already resulted in cuts to wages and living standards and it will not give workers a share of the limited economic recovery now evident. We believe capitalism remains in a deep economic and social crisis and that socialist measures are necessary to confront a crisis of this depth. This crisis is not caused by wage rises and wage cuts will not help resolve the crisis in the interests of the working class.

We also devote a lot of attention to the threat of war and

Stop war! Subscribe to LM

Well, subscribing to LM may not be enough to stop war and we would be the last people to want to sow any illusions. But we can modestly say that we are part of the movement that is campaigning against war. Labor Militant supporters were among the 230,000 who marched against war on April 15, although you would have to look at the photos extremely carefully to pick us out.

In the pages of LM we often carry articles on the growing

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the wars that are already going on. From Central America to the Middle East, the United States and its allies are determined to block progressive movements in order to protect their economic interests. This drive to war by Ronald Reagan increases the danger of nuclear war and Australia's participation as part of the U.S. war machine must cease.

The Australian Government is in a position to make a significant contribution towards world disarmament by removing the U.S. military bases and by withdrawing from the aggressive ANZUS military pact.

We also insist that progressive policies must be advanced by Labor on the liberation struggle in El Salvador, on the defence of Nicaragua against U.S. aggression, on Solidarity's fight for socialist democracy in Poland, against the Israeli aggression in the Middle East and in favour of the rights of the Palestinian people, against the Indonesian occupation of East Timor, in support of the anti-Marcos movement in the Philippines and on the need to make reparations to Vietnam.

Labor is in Government in four States and federally. Yet never before has there been a bigger gap between stated Labor policy and Government performance, let alone the gap between performance and working class interests. This gap is reflected in the important debate and discussion within the Party Branches and at Party Conferences. We seek to develop a broad coverage of this process.

We believe that the most free and open debate within the Party and affiliated unions on Party policy and practice is necessary to develop positions and actions that can represent working people from whom Labor draws its strength.

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

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

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

war danger. We try to keep on top of what Reagan and his cronies are up to. We bring news of liberation struggles in places like Central America, the Philippines and the Middle East. So if you want to keep informed so you can keep your Labor Party Branch informed and committed to the fight against war, then subscribe to LM. It costs just \$6 for 10 issues, which is a bargain in anybody's terms.

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Return to Labor Militant, P.O.Box 372, Broadway
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Signed articles do not necessarily represent editorial opinion

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Communist Party

I was not surprised to hear that 23 members of the Victorian State executive of the Communist Party have resigned from that party and decided to try and join the ALP.

It is interesting to speculate on what impact these people will have inside the ALP. They say they want to form a loose socialist organisation open to both ALP members and non-members to try and influence ALP policy.

This sounds a bit like a Fabian Society and the article by Paul White in the last issue of Labor Militant indicated where the existing Fabians have ended up — stooges for Hawke.

Those who are leaving the sinking ship of the communist Party are supporters of the Prices and

Incomes Accord which, in my view, puts them to the right of many in the ALP, particularly in Victoria. Perhaps they will end up strengthening the Centre faction against the genuine Left. If that is the case it would be better they didn't join at all.

In Sydney we've just seen two members of the Communist Party elected to the Sydney City Council. But they stood as independents and downplayed their political views. Now they have announced that they will not necessarily give their support to Labor. In other words they may side with the Liberals (otherwise known as Civic Reform) against Labor!

All of this just goes to show how far to the right the Communist Party has travelled in recent years.

NB
Petersham
NSW

Wage levels

The Editor
In the midst of Keating and Hawke's enthusiasm about economic recovery, one important statistic has gone largely unnoticed.

Under the combined impact of half indexation, wage freeze and the Accord the real cost of labour has fallen back to pre-1974/75 levels.

Through the 1960's the average share of national income going to wages was 62.9 per cent. By 1974 this had increased to 68.9 per cent.

Lynch and Fraser campaigned for wages to return to their "natural" level. The resulting policies of half indexation and then wage freeze proved successful.

Treasury statistics show that after the December quarter of 1983 the wages

share of national income was fractionally higher than the old "natural" level. Using an index system based on the period 1966/72, where 100 equals 62.9 per cent, wages were 110 in 1974, 105 by late 1981 and 101 in December 1983.

One can only assume that the proposed revised Accord will continue in the tradition of half indexation, wage freeze and Accord 1, which have combined to produce this result.

Tony Brown
Rozelle East Branch
NSW

Letters to L.M. should be sent to Labor Militant PO Box 372 Broadway, NSW 2007. Please keep them reasonably short so we can print as many as possible.

Biggest peace marches yet



The nuclear disarmament movement took a big step forward on April 15 when over 250,000 people took to the streets in rallies in cities and towns across the country.

Some of the marches were headed by ALP figures like Tom Uren, Stewart West, Jean Melzer, George Georges and Leo Brown. But the theme of the marches was clearly against many of the policies and practices of the Hawke

Government. The Government's sell-out on uranium was undoubtedly one of the reasons for the high turnout.

The following are approximate figures for the major cities: Sydney 120,000; Melbourne 100,000; Perth 25,000; Adelaide 10,000; Brisbane 10,000; Canberra 5,000; Hobart 5,000; Newcastle 4,000.

living standards

Social Rights Conference

Nearly 700 people attended the Social Rights Conference in Melbourne over Easter. This included some delegates from trade unions, and members of the ALP, socialist parties, community and solidarity groups.

Tony Brown
Member Rozelle East (NSW) ALP Branch and NSW Public Service Association

The conference ended with a plenary session which voted unanimously to continue the Social Rights Campaign on a national basis in opposition to the Prices and Income Accord of the Hawke Government. The final motion read: "That the Social Rights conference organising committee continue to co-ordinate national tasks and in particular the production of further publications.

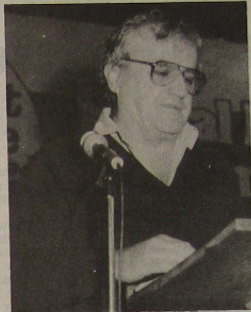
"We also encourage the formation and/or strengthening of local Rights Campaign committees to develop activities on a local or state basis."

The conference was opened by prominent Victorian ALP activist Ian Mill (see page 7 for a report of his comments). Other prominent speakers were Bill Hartley, a member of the administrative committee of the Victorian ALP; Alan Muir, the assistant State secretary of the Australian Telecommunications Employees Association in Queensland; Clarrie O'Shea, a former secretary of the tramways union in Victoria whose jailing in 1969 sparked a general strike against penal powers of the arbitration legislation; Jenny Haines, the secretary of the NSW Nurses Federation; David Grove, Federal Industrial Officer of the Food Preservers' Union; Joe Camilleri, a prominent anti-uranium activist in Melbourne; Humphrey McQueen, a well known historian and freelance author.

Other Labor Party speakers included Kevin Healy from Victoria (see comments page 7); George Preston, of the Victorian East Timor Association; Ralph Edwards, a former State organiser for the Miscellaneous Workers Union in Victoria; and Lyn Taylor, secretary of the Queensland Labor Women's Organisation.

International guest speakers were the Goete Kilden, chairman of a metalworkers union at a Volvo plant in Sweden; and Angelo Anastasiou, a member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Greece (KKE).

Sixty sessions covered a broad range of issues, including the Accord, youth, unemployment, women, land rights, military expenditure, foreign policy,



Bill Hartley spoke at the conference on Australia's policy in regard to Vietnam and Kampuchea

media and more. A series of major panels on the Accord examined its impact on the labour movement and sought to develop an alternative approach.

An informal lunchtime session for ALP members was organised by Labor Militant supporters. About 40 people from all States attended and discussed ways of promoting the Social Rights Campaign within the Party. Some of the ideas raised in this discussion were:

- Meetings to report back on the Conference and discuss an ongoing campaign.

- The possible publication of literature specifically aimed at the ALP.

- Efforts to have bodies like Federal Electorate Councils/Assemblies organise seminars on the Accord or particular aspects of it — such as how it affects the campaign for equal pay for women.

- Attempts to emulate the move of the Labor Women's Organisation in Queensland which is organising a seminar for all ALP members on the Accord and its effects.

- Continuing to seek endorsements for the Campaign by ALP bodies and individual members.

- Submitting articles and letters to official ALP publications and faction papers reporting on the Social Rights Conference.

The following are extracts from a press release sent out from the plenary session of the Conference:

"The Social Rights Conference has fulfilled its aim of helping to bring together those in the labour movement who see the imperative need to defend the working class from the attacks be-

ing made on their wages, conditions, living standards and rights and who are concerned with the need to prevent nuclear war and discuss questions of foreign policy, solidarity and independence.

"In the course of many forums, panels and individual contributions all participants helped to work out alternative policies and an alternative strategy necessary to overcome the deep crisis of capitalism in the interests of the working people.

"Prominent in the discussion was consideration of the ALP-ACTU Accord. Most speakers were critical of the Prices and Incomes Accord asserting that it had led the working class into a class collaborationist position, was dampening down struggle by the working people for their economic, political and social needs, was bringing despondency and inactivity.

"The benefits that it was claimed would flow from the Accord have either not taken place or are not stopping the general deterioration in the living standards of the people. Furthermore, the positive policy references in the Accord are already contained in ALP and ACTU policy decisions and did not need the Accord for them to be implemented.

"The conference therefore rejects the Accord and the underlying concepts contained in it and declares that it does not offer a way forward for the working class.

"The conference heard a number of speakers deal with the present dangerous international situation, the threat of nuclear war and the necessity to strengthen in every way the mass peace movement.

"The conference warmly welcomes the very big steps forward taken by the Australian peace movement, indicated by the mighty April 15 nation-wide demonstrations. Conference participants undertake to do all in their power to strengthen the movement for the prevention of nuclear war, to support every initiative for a peaceful settlement of disputes between nations. We call on the Australian government to adopt a foreign policy supporting peace and disarmament and the removal of US bases in Australia.

"It is agreed that the issues and demands which have been raised in the Social Rights Campaign and the Manifesto published in 1983 provide the basis for the development of a movement that can defend the rights of the Australian people. It does provide an alternative strategy for the labour movement and other democratic and progressive organisations. It is an alternative policy which would benefit the vast majority of the population and not just a tiny wealthy minority."

editorial

April 15 rallies

250,000 reasons to change policies

Bill Hayden did not join 250,000 disarmament supporters in the streets on April 15, but he did try to clutch the tails of this powerful mobilisation.

He sent a message to the marchers that claimed the Government "shares the (disarmament) commitment and places a high priority on policies for peace, arms control and disarmament." It suggested the rallies had indicated that Government initiatives had "the support of Australians from all walks of life."

Two days later he released a statement that expressed reservations about the ANZUS treaty and the fact that North-West Cape (U.S. military base) is a "high priority nuclear target."

But few will be fooled by Hayden's posturings. When his message was read out to the Sydney rally many in the crowd of around 120,000 found it impossible to contain boos and howls of derision.

Around the country the peace marches had clearly opposed the Labor Government's policies with demands like 'No uranium mining' and 'U.S. bases out!'. The demonstrations were enormous because most people believe that Australia is involved in preparations for nuclear war. The election of a Labor Government has done nothing to calm that fear.

Labor's case has certainly not been helped by the leaking of the Cabinet's "Strategic Basis of Australian Defence Policy" document. This states that a Labor Government would develop nuclear weapons if they were considered "necessary." It is laden with cold war rhetoric.

Hayden's case was also undermined by public statements by Prime Minister Hawke and Minister for Resources and Energy Senator Walsh.

On April 15 Hawke took advantage of a radio interview in Adelaide to stress his determination to protect the U.S. bases and the ANZUS alliance. On April 15 Walsh had dismissed the demands of the rallies for an end to uranium mining. He insulted the intelligence of those who had taken part in the protests by suggesting that they are foolish to look for a link between the mining of uranium and the production of nuclear weapons.

Hawke is, of course, the dominant figure in the Government and Walsh is a prominent member of Hayden's Centre-Left faction. Their statements suggest the Government will treat lightly the demands raised by the largest single national mobilisation this country has seen.

But the growing peace movement will continue to put pressure on the Government. This year's marches were more than twice the size of those of last year. They included contingents from the Labor Party and trade unions. Those who participated in the march will influence their friends and relatives. It is safe to assume that over a million people in Australia today are determined to do something to stop the growing war danger.

Last year the disarmament rallies took place soon after the Hawke Government was elected. They were much larger than the rallies of 1980, indicating perhaps that many people hoped Labor would take action to reduce Australia's

participation in preparations for war.

The huge size of the rallies this year indicates that no one is convinced Labor is doing anything meaningful in this regard.

Many people in Australia have reached the conclusion that the Hawke Government is pro-war. It has defended U.S. war moves in Central America and endorsed the nuclear missile build-up in Europe. It pursues an aggressive foreign policy in the Asian region, giving military aid to repressive regimes like those in Indonesia and the Philippines. It has increased spending on military hardware. And, above all, it has defended the bases on Australian soil that help to direct U.S. nuclear submarines and pinpoint nuclear targets and the ANZUS alliance that has already involved Australian troops in wars in Korea and Vietnam.

These policies are part of Hawke's consensus politics. If you are going to defend capitalism at home you have to defend it overseas. You have to defend it as a worldwide system.

Unfortunately there are many in the labour movement who do not see the link between the Hawke Government's foreign and domestic policies. Many have accepted the argument that it is in the interests of the labour movement to help the bosses recover their profits at the expense of wages and living standards.

Workers are worried about their jobs. They fear the consequences of strike action in such a period. And the Accord is ensuring that the unions police their own members to prevent outbreaks of union militancy.

But the strategy of the Accord is not working to the advantage of workers. In the past six months profits have risen while wages have continued to decline. Unemployment remains at a permanently high level. Union membership has declined over the last year.

There are already signs that the present economic recovery will not last beyond this year. A new world recession will further exacerbate the long-term crisis of capitalism. There will be a further increase in unemployment and further cuts in real wages unless unions struggle to defend the rights of their members. Yet the strategy of the Accord is seriously undermining the ability and willingness of the unions to launch such struggles.

The growing war danger is also linked to the crisis of capitalism. It is no accident that Reagan launched a far more aggressive U.S. foreign policy during the recession of 1980-82. The capitalists are determined to protect and extend their world markets and halt the anti-imperialist struggles in Third World countries.

World Wars I and II, both developed out of attempts by the capitalists to resolve the stagnation of their system by conquering new markets. World War III, potentially a nuclear holocaust, could develop in a similar manner.

The lesson for the labour movement is not to allow the bosses to dictate policies on either the domestic or international scene. The Labor Party should be committed to overthrowing the system that creates wars, not defending it.

living standards

ALP speakers at Social Rights Conference

'Accord is the bible of Hawkeism'

Two prominent members of the ALP in Victoria spoke out against the Prices and Incomes Accord at the Easter Social Rights Conference in Melbourne. They were Ian Mill, who opened the conference, and Kevin Healy, who took part in a panel on the topic "The way forward: strategies for social change."

Ian Mill is the mayor of the suburban Melbourne council of Sunshine. He is a former vice-president of the Victorian Branch of the ALP and the current secretary of the Victorian Anti-Uranium Committee. He has had over 40 years of experience in the ALP and at the March 31 State Conference was elected as chairman of the special 10-member committee set up to investigate the credentials of four right-wing unions seeking affiliation with the Victorian Branch.

In his opening remarks he stated that he did not believe capitalism is experiencing a long-term resurgence. The crisis of capitalism is "irreversible," he noted, and the workers should be told this.

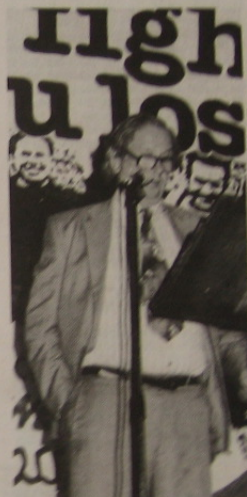
Mill accused the leaders of the ALP of misleading the working class by suggesting that wage restraint could help bring about a new prosperity. Noting that proponents of the Accord have argued that it will bring about a "transfer of income" to the non-wealthy, he concluded that it had already resulted in a "transfer of wealth" to the wealthy. He cited BRP profits to back up this argument.

"The right to organise is fundamental for the working class," he stressed. Without it "long-term aspirations will be in jeopardy."

Mill described the strategy of the Labor Government as "neo-Keynesian" and pointed out that such policies had been found wanting in the past. He pointed out that the capitalists had attempted to resolve the last deep crisis of their system, in the 1930's, by cutting wages and this had not worked either.

Perhaps the central point of his presentation was the argument that the working class must develop a socialist consciousness if it is to find a way out of the capitalist crisis. And it must reach the conclusion that it cannot rely on Labor in government to carry out a socialist transformation.

He suggested that the development of a new socialist leadership will be a process that will take place both inside and outside the ALP. The ALP alone is too divided and heterogeneous to develop such a leadership and the unions cannot be expected to play the role of leading political struggle.



Ian Mill opening the conference

Mill welcomed the conference as an opportunity to begin forging a new united front of genuine socialists. Although he saw the entry of institutional capital as a new factor in Australian politics he said it had not changed the fundamentals. It had not eliminated the need to build a united front against the bosses.

Such a united front must be built around the immediate needs of the working class and Mill listed things like the abolition of all anti-union laws and genuine tax reform as the sort of policies that would attract support.

He also spoke about the capitalist war drive and stressed that it was essential for the labour movement to realize that the U.S. and the Soviet Union do not share equal blame for the arms race. The war danger is a result of the crisis of capitalism and the U.S. is leading the escalation of war preparations.

In speaking about what could be achieved within the ALP, Mill explained that the development of the Socialist Left faction in Victoria had been important. He said that the maintenance of a strong anti-union

position for seven years is an indication that the Socialist Left had been able to consolidate progressive leadership in the Victorian Branch.

However, the development of the Centre Left faction is putting strains on the Socialist Left. In Mill's view it could lessen the influence of the genuine Left in Victoria.

Kevin Healy also spoke about the role and influence of the Socialist Left faction in Victoria. But he suggested its impact had been declining for a number of years because the nature of the faction had changed.

Healy was a founding member of the Socialist Left and a journalist for its newspaper in the early years. Today he is a councillor on the Fitzroy Council. In 1979 he was a member of the Victorian ALP State Executive when federal intervention into the Victorian Branch took place.

He described the early years of the Socialist Left as "exciting" — explaining that the founders of the faction had attempted to go beyond the normal factional politics of the ALP.

"We'd work within the ALP simply to promote policy and to debate policy and attempt to win those arguments in society," was how he explained their motivation.

"Because of the position of the ALP there is a chance those policies will be debated at a level where the public will hear them."

"In those days we had monthly general meetings. There was no executive at first. We had a weekly and later fortnightly paper for three or four years."

But after a while, Healy explained, the leaders of the Socialist Left began talking to the leaders of other factions and going to the general meetings were put off to three or four a year and became rubber stamps for the decisions of the executive, the newspaper was suspended.

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Continued on page 8

living standards

Continued from page 7

the facton, in which the executive has all the power. It would be necessary to open up structures in which policies could be freely debated. A newspaper should be published to promote alternative policies for Labor.

"We should be fighting for issues we believe in, even if that means we won't win in the short term."

Earlier in his talk Healy had attacked "Hawkeism" as a strategy for Labor. "Part of Hawkeism," he said, "is the slogan 'Bringing Australia together'. That is a slogan that, by its very nature, denies the class struggle in this society. And the Accord can be seen as the bible of the myth that the class struggle doesn't exist."

"The myth is that workers, bosses and government can somehow come together and society will be better for everyone.

"We all know that the end result of Hawkeism is that society will be a whole lot better for one class and that class is certainly not the working class."

He went on to debunk two specific myths used to justify the economic policies of "Hawkeism" — the assertions that there is a nexus between wage rises and inflation and between unemployment and inflation.

"If we can assume that wages are really only the price of labour," he commented, "then in a prices spiral, wages should also rise."

He used 1975 as an example of a year

when wages remained fairly static while prices rose dramatically. He chose 1975 because that was the year the Whitlam Government's wage indexation system was put into practice and it had also been based on the assertion that if workers exercised wage "restraint" prices would stabilise.

In looking at unemployment he noted that the past 10 years have provided no evidence for the claim that it will fall if wages remain steady. Over that period unemployment has continued to climb despite things like partial indexation and Fraser's wage freeze.

"The same approach was used by the Scullin Labor Government during the Great Depression, and it didn't work then either."

Healy also noted that "The other lesson (from the Depression) is that they ultimately got out of that mess by slaughtering millions and millions of working people in a world trade war (World War II) and that is the other frightening possibility that we naturally have to be wary of."

In Healy's view, "the capitalists learnt more from the Depression than we did."

He suggested that the "suburbanisation" of the working class is one of the methods used to "restructure" society to obstruct an organised fight-back.

"People are put in isolation on the quarter acre blocks where they need a motor car to get around. They are indebted by the credit system for the rest of their lives."

However, this had not prevented the development of a mass movement against the war in Vietnam. Healy said the dramatic change that had taken place in public consciousness could be seen by looking back over press reports in 1965 and in 1975. In 1965 the press was full of fervour about the need to defeat the communists in Asia.

"By 1975, or even earlier, the war was being described as a 'filthy, unwinnable war' (to borrow a phrase from Arthur Calwell), and that we should give it up, go home."

He said that the presence of Clarrie O'Shea on the platform (at the Social Rights Conference) reminded him of another example of united mass action that resulted in another change in thinking.

When O'Shea was jailed in 1969 under the penal powers of Arbitration and Conciliation legislation unionists around the country had spontaneously joined in a general strike. This united working class action gave the bosses such a fright that the penal powers have not been evoked since.

Like Mill, Healy stressed the importance of the current mass anti-war movement. But he also saw a weakness in this movement in that it "attacks everybody."

"This forces the cause of war from the ultimate problem which is the capitalist system which survives to make profit for those who can and to crush the working people around the world."

nuclear power

Walsh backs Hawke on uranium

At the last Party National Conference, in 1982, the amendment to open the way for further uranium mining under a Labor Government was passed by the narrow margin of 53 to 46. Many of those who are now leaders of the Centre Left faction — like Bill Hayden and Mick Young — voted for the change. But the Victorian "Independents", including John Cain and Senator John Button, voted against.

Bruce Threlfo
Member Annandale (NSW) ALP Branch

Since the 1982 Conference the Victorian, Western Australian and Queensland State Branches have maintained strong anti-uranium stands. In Queensland and Western Australia support for these stands has come from forces normally associated with both Left and Right factions.

If the delegates to the National Conference in July really represented the ranks of the Party in all States, there is little doubt a strong anti-uranium policy would be revived. But this is not the case. Parliamentarians and Party officials have a disproportionate weight. And Hawke's principle of Cabinet solidarity will ensure that the most influential delegates will be pro-uranium.

Hawke has secured the alliance with the Centre Left faction for the uranium debate and so the Centre Left parliamentarians will play a big role in consolidating the pro-uranium forces. They will probably sway the Victorian Independents who opposed the changes in 1982.

A leading identity of the Centre Left and Minister for Minerals and Resources, Senator Peter Walsh, has prepared a draft policy that resolves the contradictions between the Government's pro-uranium stand and the Party's official "phasing out" policy in favour of the Government.

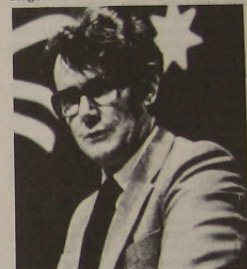
According to a report in the March 25 Financial Review, Walsh's policy would only place the following constraints on the mining and export of uranium:

- "Withhold the supply of the export of uranium 'permanently, indefinitely or for a specified period' to countries which cease to observe the non-proliferation safeguards and security conditions.
- "Refuse to allow the supply of uranium to France until France ceases testing nuclear weapons in the South Pacific.
- "Ensure that the health of uranium workers is subject to strict standards,

monitoring and protection."

Walsh has suggested that Australian scientists are on the verge of solving the problems of nuclear waste disposal through the development of the artificial rock Synroc at the Lucas Heights Atomic Energy Commission plant near Sydney. He wants to devote more resources to this project and allow the scientists to experiment with real nuclear waste.

But tests on Synroc have revealed a weakness in the substance when it is exposed to water and the scientists stress the project is still in experimental stages.



Minister for Resources and Energy Senator Peter Walsh

Similarly, Walsh's proposed safeguards against the use of Australian uranium for the development of nuclear weapons are meaningless. Once the staff leaves Australian shores the Australian Government will be powerless to prevent it being used in that way.

But, despite the unresolved problems of the nuclear power industry and the disposal of its deadly wastes, and despite the growing risk of nuclear war, Walsh is preparing to do battle with the anti-uranium forces in the Party to ensure that his policy is adopted in July.

At the Western Australian State Conference on March 31 he launched a snide attack on those in the Party who oppose uranium mining, saying their position was "no more than self-indulgent posturing or a function of ignorance." Conference disagreed with him and voted for a policy that would ensure a "phasing out" of the mining.

Walsh's Centre Left colleague, and Minister for Finance, John Dawkins has also taken up the fight in favour of uranium mining. On the day after Walsh's document was leaked to the press, he told the National Press Club in Canberra that the Party's Left should abandon the fight against uranium

monitoring and protection."

Walsh has suggested that Australian scientists are on the verge of solving the problems of nuclear waste disposal through the development of the artificial rock Synroc at the Lucas Heights Atomic Energy Commission plant near Sydney. He wants to devote more resources to this project and allow the scientists to experiment with real nuclear waste.

But tests on Synroc have revealed a weakness in the substance when it is exposed to water and the scientists stress the project is still in experimental stages.

Unfortunately, the numbers operators of the Left faction in Federal Parliament appear to have reached the same conclusion and have decided to downplay the question. Stewart West received the backing of his parliamentary colleagues for his decision to accept re-admittance to Cabinet on the basis that he will defend Cabinet's pro-uranium policy.

West's decision to resign from Cabinet, after it decided last October to allow an expansion of uranium mining at Roxby Downs and in the Northern Territory, gave hope to those in the Party and union ranks who wanted to see a campaign against the imposition of a pro-uranium policy from above.

But, outside Victoria, such a campaign was never organised. No effort was made by national leaders of the Left to really mobilise support for a clear anti-uranium policy.

The Victorian Branch, the second largest in the country, has maintained an unequivocal anti-uranium policy. Western Australia, Queensland and New South Wales have expressed dissatisfaction with the way the Government has overturned Party policy. But there has been no national campaign.

The Left cannot hide behind the excuse that an anti-uranium stand does not have electoral support. Opposition to uranium mining was a prominent demand of the April 15 peace marches that attracted a record 250,000 participants.

Undoubtedly there will still be substantial opposition from the floor of the Conference when Walsh and his colleagues introduce their pro-uranium policy. A significant number of delegates will reflect the deep anger in the Party ranks and within the union movement over the failure of the Government to abide by the old policy.

The fact that the pro-uranium forces will probably win the day demonstrates two things: National Conferences do not reflect the views of the Party ranks; and the Left has failed to make the most of an issue on which it has massive support within the whole labour movement.



Panel of speakers on the topic "The Accord: What it has meant" from left: Mark Harrington of the Victorian Unemployed Workers' Union, Bill Dawson, vice-president of the ATEA in Queensland, David Grove, federal industrial officer of the Food Preservers

Union, Maurice Sibella, a deputy shop steward at the Government Aircraft Factory in Melbourne, Anna Pina, member of the executive of the Victorian Trades Hall Council, and Alan Muir, assistant state secretary of the ATEA in Queensland

local government

Interview with Craig Johnston

A socialist gay activist on Sydney City Council

Local government elections for five Sydney councils in April resulted in significant losses for Labor. The Party lost control of the Sydney City Council and the Mayor of Leichhardt, Evan Jones, was defeated along with other Labor candidates.

Janel Burstall

Member Rozella East (NSW) ALP Branch and Municipal Employees Union

In the City Council elections, the worst results were achieved by right-wingers associated with the former Mayor of South Sydney, Bill Hartup. (After the South Sydney and City Councils were amalgamated in 1982 Hartup's tight clique was able to play a dominating role in meetings of the ALP caucus.)

Preselected Labor candidates were defeated in a number of areas by candidates who called themselves independents. These included Communist Party members Jack Munday and Brian McGahan, who were elected to the City Council.

However, the results were not all bad for Labor and one of the Party's most successful candidates was Craig Johnston, the secretary of the East Sydney Branch who was number two on the Labor ticket for Macquarie Ward. This ward takes in Wollomooloo, East Sydney, Darlinghurst and Surry Hills. It includes Oxford Street, and the heart of Sydney's gay community.

Johnston ran as an open gay socialist candidate for the ALP, and thus helped to destroy the myth propagated by the Right, and many on the Left, that you have to appear conservative and straight to succeed in elections.

On April 30, the Sydney Morning Herald ran a feature article on Johnston and McGahan (also an open gay candidate), describing them as a new phenomenon in Australian politics. It seems that Neville Wran also took note of their success for he announced, on his return from overseas, that he would personally pursue a campaign for homosexual law reform in the May sitting of Parliament. (Perhaps Wran is wanting to take his distance from the swing machine in NSW following the elections against Labor in the State elections.)

Craig Johnston told Labor Militant

why he decided to stand for the Council.

"My primary motivation was as a gay liberationist who thinks that openly gay people should hold positions of public authority, no matter what level. People in positions of authority can encourage other gay people to affirm their dignity and fight for their rights.

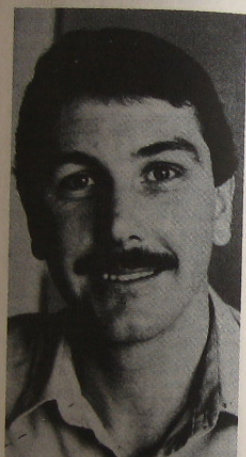
"But since I'm not a gay separatist, and I am a socialist, I thought it was important that the particular arena of struggle that I've been involved in for most of the past five years — that is the struggle for gay liberation — should be seen as part of the broad struggle for a socially just society.

"It was important that somebody who was a socialist take part in the Labor Party and be representative of the Party. I thought I could do that sort of job a lot better than other people in the Labor Party."

An election campaign of this nature required something more than the usual ALP local government campaign. So Johnston and his supporters established the Oxford Street Committee to Elect Craig Johnston. Johnston explained:

"Since I had support in the gay community in the Ward, we knew there would be people who would be prepared to support me who would not otherwise actively support the Labor Party. It's not that they weren't progressive, but they weren't short on gay rights. Given that, I thought it was important that we mobilise them, because otherwise that support could be mobilised against the Labor Party.

"For that reason a number of people supporting me established a specific gay, non-party, promotional committee, which financed some general material. This helped to alert the gay community that I was running but I gay people to vote for them? I was not to vote for the Labor Party ticket. I was a Labor Party candidate. This was to undermine some of the arguments being put around by centrist forces in the gay community. The Labor Party is irredeemably anti-gay. We were representing the view that the Labor Party is a site of struggle and gay people could be involved in it for gay rights and for gay liberation and for socialism."



Craig Johnston

Now that the election is over there is some talk that the Oxford Street Committee should continue as a socialist, gay liberationist organisation that's based on the gay community in this area, and with an outreach beyond the gay community. It could take up issues of concern to gays in the Oxford Street area, and also promote participation by gays in campaigns around many other issues.

According to Johnston: "There should be open gays who are radical and militant involved in so-called community issues that affect everyone and what I call the working class residential environment."

Following the elections the line-up within the Labor caucus on the new City Council will be six from the old Hartup machine, three from the group led by Lord Mayor Doug Sutherland and four from the Left.

Johnston commented: "In the old Council, the Sutherland forces and the

Left formed an alliance to outvote Hartup, but not always successfully. I suspect that those lines will probably keep operating, and therefore there will now be a majority for what I'm calling a Left-Centre. This should make the Labor Party less conservative than it was in the last Council."

A big problem for progressive ALP aldermen in a caucus dominated by the Right is that ALP rules stipulate that they cannot report dissenting views to other Labor Party bodies, including their own Branches. Johnston's Branch, East Sydney, is planning to challenge this rule at the 1985 State Conference.

For the coming Conference it has submitted three proposals for changing local government procedures. They are:

1) the preselection of the Lord Mayor by rank-and-file ballot rather than by State Council of the ALP.

2) the abolition of the archaic term "alderman" and its replacement with "councillor."

3) an increase in the aldermanic allowance to \$5,000 a year. Johnston explained the last point by saying the current low allowances are "a relic of days when councils were run by men of property and it's assumed now that you're some sort of social worker rather than a political organiser. It's only the more affluent people who can spend the time doing the work that needs to be done in organising working people."

When asked what Labor should do to rebuild its support and prevent further losses in the next local government elections, Johnston replied:

"I would like the Labor Party in the city to work out a broad socialist understanding of what Labor should be doing in local government, including socialist policies for city planning in general. This requires an understanding of all the specific issues that fall within that — like housing, traffic policies and all of the things which affect the conditions of existence of working people. We also need to look at welfare and a reform of administrative procedures.

"We've never taken on the question of the reform of the bureaucracy, especially in the City of Sydney. The top and middle levels of the bureaucracy here are made up of Civic Reform (the conservative opposition) and Hartup appointees.

"I would like all these things to be talked about within the ALP. If necessary, we should hold workshops so that we can plan now for the next elections. We did not go to this election with fully worked out policies.

"Secondly, the Labor Party doesn't try to mobilise people for their rights and dignity on a number of fronts. It assumes that if you elect people to government, at whatever level, that is how you get social change. That's a fun-

damental flaw. I believe it's the people organising themselves who bring about social change, and the Labor Party can be an aid to that. It can also be an obstacle so I would prefer to see it being an aid.

"I would like to see ALP Branches (which are seen by the Right simply as a basis for preselection) as organisations which actually involve themselves in their local communities, that are community organisations in their own right.

"It's not just simply the old thing of Labor Party Branches talking about garbage and kerbing. But there's a point to that old style that the Left has overlooked or dismissed as not being important.

"East Sydney Branch has adopted a more practical approach in this regard. For example, it made a submission to the Inquiry about prostitution in the area. This supported the decriminalisation of prostitution but also took note of residential amenities."

Branch members initiated a local community newspaper, which Johnston calls "non-Party but progressive." Because it is non-Party, "It doesn't have to be uncritical of the Labor Party if it deserves criticism, but it's not anti-Labor by definition. It is helping to build the ALP Branch, and the spin-off is good for the ALP electorally."

Councils dominated by the ALP Right in Sydney have been notorious for providing jobs for the friends and relatives of the aldermen. This has occasionally resulted in conflicts between the councils and the relevant unions.

Many of the Labor-dominated councils have also come into conflict with their employees over wages and conditions.

Johnston explained his attitude to this problem:

"In any public organisation that's not a profit making organisation, it's a question of priorities, obviously. As a socialist, you want to be an ideal employer, and you're committed to unionism and working with unions. But I've never been involved in this scale of enterprise before, so I can't say much more. But obviously, I can't say much more for a socialist to be in, because one is involved in managing a level of the capitalist state.

"The question of reforming the bureaucracy involves concepts of workers control, workers participation and workers management. Like the Public Service, these organisations are very hierarchical and I think that this is where a reforming Labor Government can experiment. This area is new to me but I am committed to workers self-management and it's something I would like to explore."

On the subject of revenue, Johnston said that he viewed rate payments as a form of taxation on property owners. He favoured increasing this source of council revenue provided the rate burden is directed at commercial property owners and not residents.

He summed up his involvement in the arena of local government in the following way:

"I recognise that it involves contradictions and whatever is resolved will be the outcome of struggle."



Johnston and other progressive aldermen on the Sydney City Council are fighting to keep residential areas close to the city centre. One popular measure of the outgoing Labor Council was to impose a 2% levy on business houses to fund public housing

National Conference '84

Prices-Incomes Accord Pay-offs for wage 'restraint'

This is the third in a series of articles leading up to the July National Conference. Each article in the series examines a major area of policy to be debated at Conference.

Some of the most important and interesting debate at the coming Conference will be on economic policy. At the 1982 National Conference the framework for the Prices and Incomes Accord was adopted with little comment. That framework is unlikely to be seriously challenged in July but significant differences over what the Accord means in practice will emerge.

Martin Tuck
Member Livingstone (NSW) ALP Branch

The Accord has been in operation for over a year, so it can now be assessed from direct experience. The first conclusion that should be drawn is that its "wage restraint" has meant a cut in real wages.

The National Wage Case of September 1983, the first after the introduction of the Accord, ruled out any wage increase current economic recovery is. They also explain why Hawke from the wage freeze that Fraser introduced in December 1982. The Hawke Government had argued against such compensation.

Furthermore, in passing on a 4.3 per cent rise at that wage case, the Arbitration Commission forced the unions to accept severe restrictions on their right to campaign for pay rises based on catch-up and anomalies. It virtually ruled out any pay rises outside the National Wage Cases.

Now the Government is preparing a new swindle to cut wages by at least 2.7 per cent in October by discounting this amount from CPI rises for the March and June quarters this year in exchange for the introduction of Medicare. Thus wage earners will not be compensated for the price increases that take place between March and September of this year.

In addition to these specific wage cuts, the centralised wages system has an inbuilt mechanism for eroding real wages. In the first place the CPI index does not take into account a number of important cost increases, like Government charges and indirect taxes. Secondly the wage rises are granted up to six months after the price increases have occurred, thus ensuring that wages will always lag behind price increases.

Many supporters of the Accord are willing to admit that it has resulted in wage cuts but they claim these are offset by improvements in the "social wage" — ie in areas like taxation, health care, employment, and general welfare. The most important of these areas should be examined in some detail.

1) Unemployment. The Government is arguing that "substantial and sustainable" employment growth has occurred over the past six months, partly as a result of wage "restraint" on the part of the unions. It points to the fact that the overall unemployment rate has dropped from over 10 per cent in the middle of last year to 9.4 per cent in February this year.

This is hardly a dramatic fall and it does not represent an improvement in all areas. Of the 101,900 jobs "created" during the first year of the Hawke Government, the Bureau of Statistics has estimated that 25,000 were in financial institutions, and 47,000 in the public service and Government-funded projects. In the same period 15,700 jobs were lost in manufacturing industries and 11,300 were lost in agriculture (despite the ending of the drought).

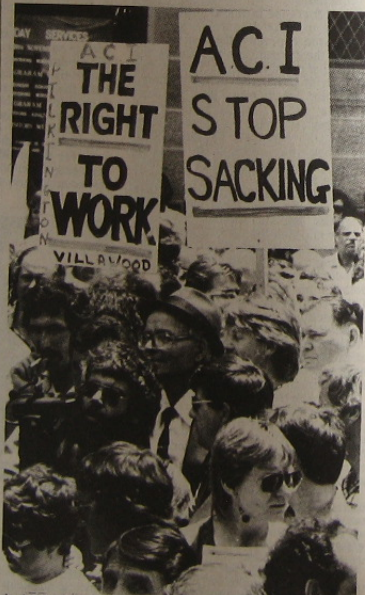
The Bureau estimates that a total of 319,000 jobs have been

lost in manufacturing since May 1982. After a brief hiccup in the second part of last year, the downward trend has continued.

One of the "boom" areas at present is housing construction. Employment in this areas has increased by 2.8 per cent in the first three months of 1984, but the total is still below its level of a year ago. Statistics also show that investments in non-dwelling buildings has actually declined over the past six months.

These figures give a good indication as to how narrow the current economic recovery is. They also explain why Hawke and Keating have been publicly pleading with leading manufacturers to invest in new production. Surveys of investments plans are consistently showing that most capitalists lack confidence in the present recovery. They are taking no risks.

Those improvements in employment levels that have occurred have largely resulted from a cyclical improvement in the economy. Government projects have made a small contribution. But there are still some 700,000 unemployed ac-



A 1982 demonstration against unemployment. The Hawke Government has done little to create jobs

ording to official figures, and the hidden unemployed (those who have given up hope of getting a job or who don't qualify for the dole) are also increasing in number.

So union wage restraint and Government policies have made little difference in this area. Now the Hawke Government is openly canvassing the possibility of providing government assistance to those corporations that want to introduce labour saving technology. While he was in Japan in February Hawke told Australian workers they should be concerned "not merely for today's jobs but tomorrow's children."

2) Taxation. The Accord promised a number of specific things in regard to tax reform. These included a promise to restructure existing tax scales and have an annual review of how the tax system works; a reduction in indirect taxes; the smashing of the tax avoidance industry and the tightening up of existing taxes on corporations. The Government's election promises included a reduction in direct income taxes.

The Hawke Government's first budget ignored all these commitments and reduced company taxes by 14 per cent. This was a slap in the face to the union movement and the ACTU leaders felt compelled to publicly state their disappointment and call for a definite plan for tax reform in the 1984 budget.

Plans for the August budget are already being mapped out and it is clear a new taxation "package" is to be devised. The Government plans a cut in personal income taxes that will save the "average" wage earner \$3 a week. This will be a welcome change to the more normal tax increase, but it is hardly something to get excited about. Furthermore, it may be offset by increases in indirect taxes.

Hawke and Keating attended a two-day meeting of the Australian Business Council at the end of March where discussions were held on what would constitute an acceptable tax package. The business leaders present made it clear they are in favour of a cut in income taxes provided it is balanced by the introduction of a broadly-based consumption tax (ie something like the Value Added Tax which adds 8 per cent to the price of all retail goods in Britain).

In the third week of March the ACTU executive also held a week-long meeting to prepare its negotiating positions for the coming year. On taxes it resolved only to demand a Government review of "corporate tax liability"; the reintroduction of legislation designed to defeat "bottom of the harbour" tax avoidance; and further assessment of the likely effect of the Medicare levy. It projected a meeting with the Government to discuss the "quantity of tax changes".

The Financial Review has reported that the ACTU will also press for the creation of six tax brackets in order to relieve the pressure on those at the lower ends of existing brackets.

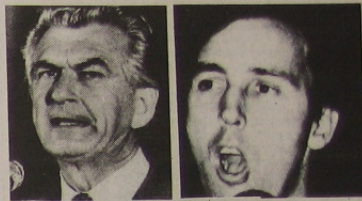
The ACTU proposals represent a retreat from demanding full implementation of the promises made in the Accord (not to mention an ACTU policy which includes things like calls for a "broadly-based wealth tax" and an "excess profits tax").

In summary, the Accord will have resulted in no tax reforms before this year's budget (ie 18 months after it was introduced). These reforms will result in savings of only a few dollars and may be offset by increases in indirect taxes (in violation of the conditions of the Accord).

The Accord's dismal record on tax reform is making some of the union leaders nervous about the future of the Accord. According to a report in the Sydney Morning Herald on April 12, unions as diverse as the Amalgamated Metals, Foundry and Shipwrights Union and the NSW Vehicle Builders Union are demanding that the Government honour its promise to reduce, rather than increase, indirect taxes.

In regard to tax reform the Government will support a conservative approach with the argument that the economy cannot afford substantial reforms. They will say that the proposed tax cut will cost about \$1000 million and that any more than this will blow out the budget deficit and fuel inflation.

Labor Militant, May 1984



But, of course, the Government will not contemplate new wealth taxes. With companies like BHP making record profits, now is a good time to make the bosses pay for the long-term economic crisis. The Accord is supposed to be based on the principle of "equality of sacrifice" yet the workers are being told that they must exercise further restraint even when profits are booming.

3) Medicare. This is being presented as a major achievement of the approach outlined in the Accord. The Government is boasting that Medicare is its single most important reform. But it is far from the free, universal health care system that a Labor Government should introduce without any strings attached.

In the first place, workers still have to pay for health care. They cannot avoid the 1 per cent tax levy and if they are not prepared to wait long hours in public hospitals they must also pay 15 per cent of the fee for a visit to the doctor. Those who decide they need extra insurance, above Medicare's very basic service, will probably end up paying more than they did before Medicare was introduced.

Medicare will result in a small saving for those on very low wages who did not already qualify for the "disadvantaged" status.

Health Minister Neal Blewett has produced figures that are supposed to prove that Medicare results in a significant increase in take-home pay. He estimates that the worker on the average weekly wage with a family to support will pay about \$4 a week in levy and an extra \$6 to cover necessary additional insurance — a total of \$10. Under pre-Medicare arrangements he estimates the same worker would be paying \$10.75 a week.

So Blewett's own figures indicate that the average worker will save just 75 cents a week, yet Medicare will be used to lop about 2.7 per cent off the March and June CPI figures so that the pay rise at the next National Wage Case in October will be a negligible 1 per cent.

Not only has Medicare produced little or no saving for most workers, it has not improved the quality of health care available. The Hawke Government has done nothing to reverse the deterioration in public hospitals that resulted from the Fraser Government's austerity drive. Yet more people are trying to use the hospitals to take advantage of their Medicare coverage. This has resulted in longer queues and more pressure on both hospital staff and patients.

In its review of the first year of the Accord the ACTU Executive has stressed that it has increased union participation in economic planning. Hawke has promoted his "consensus" approach by hosting the summit extravaganza and by setting up tripartite bodies like the Economic Planning Advisory Council.

But in reality Hawke and Keating have listened only to the advice of business leaders in framing their economic strategy. They have discussed taxation policy with the Business Council. And they got a leading banker, Vic Martin, to prepare the report on deregulating financial institutions.

Continued on page 16



Victory celebrations in the Plaza de Revolution in Managua

Peter Milton, a Labor member of Federal Parliament for the Victorian seat of La Trobe, made a personal fact-finding mission to Nicaragua, Cuba and Venezuela in late January. The following is part of the report he distributed among his fellow Parliamentarians on his return. It reports his visit to Nicaragua and makes recommendations for future relations between Australia and Nicaragua.

As part of a fact-finding visit to Latin American nations in January and February I visited Nicaragua. The visit covered seven days from Wednesday, 18 January to Tuesday 24 January 1984 Inclusive, and involved discussions with Ministers and Public Servants and visits to areas around the capital Managua, including the towns of Leon, Masaya and Miriamba and Lake Nicaragua and the Masaya Volcano.

As far as I am aware, I am the only Australian Parliamentarian who has visited Nicaragua and one of the few Parliamentarians to visit Cuba and Venezuela. In consequence, there is very little first hand knowledge in the

Peter Milton's report on Central America visit

'Australia should aid Nicaragua'

Federal Parliament of the existing conditions in the three countries, and the corollary is an acute lack of knowledge about Australia amongst the peoples and officials of those countries.

In assessing the performance of the Sandinista Government it is important to note that the economy was in an appallingly devastated state in 1979 when the Sandinistas gained power. The 1972 earthquake had destroyed the central district of the capital Managua and severely disrupted the economy. The previous Somoza-led dictatorship had annexed international reconstruction funds for earthquake relief for its own private use. With the physical infrastructure destroyed by both the earthquake and the civil war, the new revolutionary government found itself with severe inflation and a paralysis of productive capacity. In addition, there was a flight of capital and a large increase of foreign debt. With the previous Somoza Government holding a large segment of the economy in its own hands the revolutionary government inherited large Government holdings.

The Sandinista Government was therefore in a position to reorganise Government owned entities on socialist lines and also to participate directly in the major productive activities of the nation. For example, the domestic financial system was nationalised. However, the floods and droughts of 1982 and 1981. More importantly economic recovery has been hampered by the need to funnel resources to national defence.

Despite the difficulties, the Government has made a number of achievements. The illiteracy rate has been decreased from 50% of the adult population to 12% and student enrolments have doubled from half a million in 1979 to one million in 1982. Health, education, child welfare, and worker participation programmes have all been developed and improved. The aim of the Sandinista Government, despite reports to the contrary, has been to support the concept of a mixture of private and public enterprise, and that was quite clear from my own observations of the existence of private industry in Managua.

A particularly moving experience for my wife, Joyce, and I, was to meet and talk with the 17 women who had petitioned the Pope to officiate at a mass for their deceased sons and daughters who had been killed in fighting with the insurgent forces invading from Honduras with the intent of returning the military Government to power. The insurgent and paralyse the port facilities to destroy the coffee harvest has made no secret of the fact that it is providing arms and supplies for the Contras both directly and through the Honduran Government).

The women had been shattered when the Pope refused their request and spontaneous demonstrations had been mounted against him. The women were very emotional in their support for the Sandinista Government and their priest

joined them. The priest spoke English, and through him they expressed their continuing and fervent support for the aims of the revolution, but they also indicated the strength of their religious faith.

The attitude of the Pope had both upset and angered them, and for them their priest was the true representative of the Church. When they sang their National Anthem, with tears streaming down the faces of some of them, the depth of feeling and sympathy which we felt for them was overwhelming, particularly as the meeting took place in a small parish hall, with the happy voices of school children coming from the nearby school.

Our meeting with the Defence Committees or neighbourhood councils, was similarly overwhelming as the people were so eager to meet us. We attended a full committee session and afterwards answered questions about Australia. After the meeting, in the early hours of the morning, we toured the street blocks and talked to the people who were on duty in two shifts of 11 pm to 2 am and 2 am to 5 am.

Their main task is to ensure that there are no social disturbances and that there is no infiltration from insurgents. They explained how the councils operated in making decisions based on the recommendations of the residents in the neighbourhood on matters such as child care, education, health and the provision of services to the neighbourhood. With the moonlight streaming down on the concrete blocks they proudly showed us the new road works they had constructed.

Membership is entirely voluntary but with people's enthusiasm for the revolution and with the oppression and horror of the Somoza Government fresh in people's memories, the Sandinistas have no difficulty in gaining the full and active involvement of the people.

The following initiatives in my view are those which should and could be undertaken by Australia.

1. It is important for Government Parliamentarians to become personally acquainted with the political and social conditions of the peoples and Governments of Latin America, particularly those countries in the Central American and Caribbean region. Preferably, a small delegation of Government Members and Senators should make an official visit, but in any case, I urge individual Parliamentarians to use their travel allowance for a visit to Nicaragua and other countries in the region.

2. Australia should provide immediate assistance to Nicaragua either by way of direct grants of commodities (e.g. wheat), or finance by the medium of long term loans. Interest was expressed by the Director of the International Fund for Reconstruction, Cesar Arostegeri, in our Overseas Aid Programme and the means of contact. I pointed out that the programme was at present under review. The example was quoted of a recent loan by the Canadian Government of \$15 million to Nicaragua for a 50 year period with no interest, for the purchase of machinery in Canada.

3. Australia should send a trade delegation to Nicaragua

Labor Millitant, May 1984

which could investigate more concrete long term improvements in trade between the two countries. Of course it would be possible to combine the activities of a Parliamentary delegation with activities involving scientific, technical and cultural exchanges, if sufficient professional staff were added to the delegation.

4. Finally, whilst I applaud the up-grading of diplomatic relations between Australia and Nicaragua, whereby our Ambassador to Mexico has been given more responsibilities in relation to a presence in Nicaragua, I appreciate that our diplomatic representation in the whole of Latin America is minimal and is part of the larger need for Australia to have a greater presence in the whole region. However, I am not convinced that even an extensive visit once every six months is sufficient to keep Australia fully up to date with the political and economic developments in such a volatile country as Nicaragua. I would hope that a trade representative, at least, could be stationed in Managua on a permanent basis.



Loading grain in Nicaragua



El Salvador

Continued from page 23

there will encourage the workers and peasants of all of Central and South America to take control of their countries out of the hands of pro-U.S. regimes.

This will continue to push forward the United States military build-up in Honduras, the provocations against the Nicaraguan Government regardless of its generous and impeccable handling of opposition within the country, and the military intervention in El Salvador.

The mining of Nicaraguan harbours, the use of Honduran artillery to attack Nicaraguan border towns, and the recent increase in demands to the U.S. Congress for military aid to El Salvador, show that the United States Government is increasing the stakes even as public opinion is running

against it.

According to a report in the March issue of Alert, newspaper of the U.S. Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador, Special Envoy to Central America Richard Stone has been replaced by Harry Shlaudemann, who acted as executive director of the Kissinger Commission.

"Shlaudemann held a diplomatic post at the U.S. Embassy in the Dominican Republic when 23,000 U.S. marines invaded that country in 1965 and was a charge d'affaires at the U.S. embassy in Chile in 1973 when the Government of Salvador Allende was destabilized and overthrown."

Alert makes the point that political setbacks for Ronald Reagan's Central American adventures "certainly do not make direct U.S. intervention impossible. It could be triggered at any time as a result of a military or political crisis, such as another strategic victory for the FMLN or right-wing factional conflicts. They, however, make intervention more politically costly."

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National Conference

Continued from page 13

Now Keating has prepared a draft economic platform for the National Conference that removes almost every mention of Government intervention in the sphere of economic planning. He wants to promote a highly competitive free enterprise approach to enable the largest corporations and banks to prosper at the expense of others.

The question of deregulation will be taken up in the next article in this series. But suffice it to say here that this contradicts ACTU policy and the Government has already demonstrated that it is not serious about consulting the union movement before making major decisions in regard to

economic planning.

Economic debate at Conference will achieve little if it is limited to differing interpretations of the Accord. The leaders of the Hawke Government will argue that the central principle of the Accord is that workers can only expect benefits when the "economy can afford them."

The Left should counter this by arguing that the Accord has failed to deliver any significant benefits to workers and that other, socialist, measures are needed to resolve the crisis in favour of the vast majority. In place of the Accord it should urge the adoption of a strategy that can mobilise the working class to take political action to defend its living standards and fundamental rights.

That is, the framework (and not just the contents) of the Accord should be the subject of debate.

Party played a bad role in relation to the socialisation movement. Accepting the line from Moscow that Social Democrats were nothing but Social Fascists, the CP not only stood aside from the struggle inside the ALP but branded the leaders of the socialisation movement as "Left social fascists."

The only strategy the CP had towards the activists in the Units was to draw them out of the ALP. Their role in encouraging the Revolutionary Socialist wing to break up the movement and lead people out of the ALP in 1933 only hastened the demise of the movement.

But there are also many positive lessons to be drawn from the experiences of the Units. Above all, the simple fact that they developed is the best possible reply to those Social Democratic defeatists of today who say that the Australian working class is too apathetic to be interested in socialism and class struggle politics. The fact is that when workers saw this movement developing inside the political party monthly meetings, they flocked to join it; not just to attend campaigns on the unions, but to become activists in the Units and campaign for socialist ideas.

There is nothing inherently conservative about Australians. As elsewhere the moods of the Australian working class change with changing social conditions and they can be won to an open campaign for socialist policies.

Socialisation Units

Continued from page 19

mobilise thousands of class conscious ALP members and had the potential to develop a broader strategy.

But the central leaders made some important tactical mistakes in the battle with the Langties. They should certainly have challenged much earlier for influence over the Party apparatus and campaigned for internal democracy in both wings of the movement. They were beaten by the bureaucratic manoeuvres of the Langties because they did not act soon enough to transform the organisational structures that control both the Party and the unions. This was because they saw their role as being supplementary to the day-to-day functions of these working class organisations. But their aims could never have been achieved without a conscious campaign to turn the Party and unions into effective fighting organisations.

The movement's weaknesses were illustrated by the fact that it had far more support in the Party Branch structure than in the unions. And it was the Langties' control of the union bureaucracy that enabled them to smash the Units.

Another factor to bear in mind is that the Communist

Why the movement collapsed

The following is the second of a two-part series on the development of the powerful Socialisation Units in the NSW Branch of the Labor Party in the period 1931 to 1933.

The first part dealt with how the movement developed and organised itself. It also looked at the early conflicts between the leaders of the Units and the supporters of NSW Labor Premier Jack Lang.

The first part ended with a description of how the Units organised a co-ordinating structure that helped to overcome bureaucratic obstruction from Langites on the Party Executive. It explained that non-members of the ALP were drawn into activity in the Units.

The second part begins by describing how the leaders of the movement attempted to build Units in the union movement. It goes on to examine sharp differences in approach that eventually split the movement and contributed to its demise. It attempts to draw lessons from this movement for militant socialists in the Labor Party today.

In mid-1931 the ALP general-secretary, Graves, tried to exclude non-ALP members from the Units. When a motion to this effect was adopted by the Party Executive, McNamara initiated moves to force a special State Conference on the issue. When it became clear that the Units had the strength to do this, the Executive backed down and a compromise was reached. Only members of other political organisations — in effect the Communist Party — could not take out membership in the Units.

Martin Tuck

Member of Livingstone (NSW) ALP Branch

In 1932 the Inner Unit began moves to systematise the structure of the movement. In each State electorate, Units would be linked through an electorate committee and groups of State electorates (grouped for election of delegates to Easter Conference) would be linked by a group council. The group councils would be linked by the Aggregate Meeting comprising three delegates from each group council. The first Aggregate Meeting, structured in this way, met on February 1, 1933.

As mentioned in Part I of this series, the socialisation movement experienced difficulty in establishing Units in the trade union movement.

The initial call for the formation of the Units had gone to both wings of the labour movement. Yet, while there were 97 Branch Units by the time of the 1931 Easter Conference, there were only 2 union Units.

It was not until mid-1932 that the leaders of the movement paid serious attention to the problem of building Units in the unions — at the time they finally came to the decision that they had to break the control of the Langties over the Party apparatus.

In July 1932 McNamara announced the formation of the Industrial Socialisation Committee to act independently of the Party Executive, but in concert with the Party Socialisation Committee. The first members of the Industrial Committee were appointed by the Party committee, but the intention was that this committee would later be elected by union Socialisation Units that were to be established.

Labor Militant, May 1984



Bill McNamara, a central leader of the Socialisation Units

The NSW Labor Council approved the move to establish the Units and called on affiliates to carry this through. At that time there were 11 groups of unions in the Labor Council and 9 of them passed motions calling on member unions to establish Units. A letter from Kilburn and McNamara to all union secretaries called on the unions to establish Units and allow branches to establish sub-units.

Members of the Langite Inner Group — including Labor Council secretary Jock Gargon — did not publicly oppose these moves. But behind the scenes they worked to sabotage the plan.

McNamara and Kilburn could do little to get around totally unco-operative union bureaucrats and, by April 1933, only 15 Units had been formed.

Nevertheless the Industrial Socialisation Committee organised a conference for delegates from those Units and

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for unionists who were already active in Branch Units.

Rank-and-File unionists were encouraged to form unofficial Socialisation Units and take part in the broader group meetings. The Industrial Socialisation Committee also began to organise Job Units — or cells.

It is not known how many unofficial Units and Job Units were formed. But the move to establish such groups was the pretext the Langties had been waiting for to move openly to smash the entire socialisation movement structure. Penetration of the union ranks was something these bureaucrats could never allow. It threatened to shake their control of Party Conferences.

In the first part of this series it was noted that the rejection of a Three Year Plan (for the establishment of a "Socialist State" by the socialisation of key industries) by the 1931 Easter Conference led to a clear split in the movement.

While Kilburn and McNamara retreated on demanding immediate implementation of socialisation measures, Tom Payne — a member of the Communist Party from 1920 to 1925 — drafted the Payne Report, which opened as follows:

"1. Socialisation means the social ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange.

"2. The first step to Socialisation is the capture of political power by the working class.

"3. This act entails a social revolution, which means, in essence, the complete destruction of the Capitalist State apparatus.

"4. Recognising the existence of the class conflict that is waged continuously between the working class and the capitalist class in those who sell their labour power, and who that purchase same, it must be apparent to all that this struggle must culminate in a revolutionary conflict between the classes.



Jack Lang

"5. The aim of the working class should, and must be, the complete expropriation of the capitalist class and, in its stead, set up the dictatorship of the working class for the purpose of organising society upon the basis of Socialism; such should be the aim of the Party if the objective is not to become a meaningless phrase".

In opposition to the Payne Report, McNamara drafted a statement attacking the advocacy of seizing power by means of "revolutionary violence". It suggested that "solid socialisation propaganda and organisation" would guarantee that the objective could be obtained in a "peaceful and orderly" fashion. Only if the extreme right organisation — New Guard — staged a "coup d'etat" to establish a "fascist regime" would it be necessary to reply with a general strike and mass insurrection. Otherwise, the document maintained, the collapse of capitalism was inevitable and this would open the opportunity for the evolution towards socialism.

McNamara's document was adopted unanimously by the Socialisation Committee (including the four Langties) and became known as that committee's Declaration of Policy. The Declaration of Policy and the Payne Report were presented together in the October issue of Socialisation Call.

In August, the Payne Report had been officially adopted as policy by the Aggregate Meeting. However, after publication of the two positions in Socialisation Call, a motion was put at an Aggregate Meeting by one of McNamara's supporters calling for the Declaration to replace the Payne Report as official policy.

After a full day's debate this motion was carried by a vote of 25 to 51.

After this the "Socialism in Our Time" current split into the Democratic Socialists (led by the Inner Unit) and the Revolutionary Socialists. The leaders of the latter, Payne and Sydney, withdrew from the Inner Unit after the defeat of their document. Their wing of the movement steadily declined in influence.

At the 1932 Metropolitan Conference, Payne submitted his report for a vote by that Conference. Kilburn presented the Declaration of Policy as an amendment and, in speaking to it, he attacked Payne for being a "tool of the Communist Party." Kilburn's amendment was adopted by a vote of 81 to 11.

Six weeks later, the Easter Conference unanimously endorsed the Declaration of Policy with a preamble calling on the Labor Party to fight future elections — State and Socialisation — on the Socialisation Objective and to assign the Socialisation Committee a role in drafting policy speeches on this subject.

Also at the 1932 Conference, however, the Executive submitted a motion preventing any ALP member from holding joint membership of organisations in which the Communist Party was particularly active — notably the Unemployed Workers' Movement and the Friends of the Soviet Union. This attack united the Democratic Socialists and Revolutionary Socialists against the Langties, but the Langties won the vote by 73 to 42.

After the 1932 Conference, Tom Payne invited ALP members to a special conference to discuss action against the ruling of the so-called auxiliary bodies (the ones deemed to be dominated by the CP). Under pressure from Lang's Inner Group, McNamara and Kilburn called on members of the Units to boycott this conference and, in disgust, Payne announced his intention to rejoin the Communist Party.

In May, 1932, the Lang Government was sacked and elections were called for June 11. The result was a huge swing against Labor and Socialisation Call launched a vitriolic attack on the Lang leadership for refusing to campaign on the Socialisation Objective.

Thereafter the Socialisation Unit leaders began their campaign to penetrate the unions and take control of the Party apparatus and the faction fight, to the death, began.



Jock Garden

The Langties made use of a widely-publicised October speech by Archbishop Sheehan who had declared that no Catholic should belong to, or even vote for, the ALP as long as it retained its Socialisation Objective. In response to the archbishop's speech a leader of the Langties, Harold McCauley, announced that a motion to disband the Units would be presented to the 1933 Conference.

However, the Langties still had a major scare before they got to that Conference. For, in elections for the Party Executive in November and December 1932, candidates representing the Socialisation Units secured a clear majority of 17 out of 28 positions. The old Executive found a pretext, never publicly announced, for ordering new ballots for four positions and with intensive campaigning the Inner Group squeaked home in each ballot to gain 15 positions and restore its majority.

In January 1933, Lang opened the campaign against the Units in a major speech in which he announced a new campaign for the socialisation of credit. In it he attacked the "vandalous pedagogues who deride the practical strength of the Labor Movement."

At the Metropolitan Conference in February the Inner Group leaders demanded that the Party unite around Lang's "courageous and pragmatic" campaign and patch up the divisions that were so apparent.

Even though McNamara and Kilburn had announced their support for Lang's campaign and declared confidence in the Party leadership, Harold McCauley submitted an article to the Labor Daily claiming that a "clique organised in the name of Socialisation" had launched a "direct and cunning attack" on the "great leader" Lang.

From that time on the Labor Leader — in which Lang had a large shareholding — launched daily and scurrilous attacks on the Unit leaders.

While the Unit leaders were trying to defend themselves against these attacks, the Langties were lobbying the Branches — claiming there was a secret conspiracy to destroy Lang at a time when he alone could save the country from economic ruin.

The Labor Daily published "spontaneous" resolutions from Branches denouncing the Units and praising Lang.

Elections for delegates to Easter Conference were called at short notice and it was not really surprising when these



gave the Langties a comfortable majority.

So it was that Conference voted decisively for a motion calling for the dissolution of all Units and for the functions of the Socialisation Committee to be handed over to the Executive, to support the Lang campaign for the socialisation of credit.

An Aggregate Meeting of the Socialisation Units was held on the Saturday after Conference. The Revolutionary Socialists mobilised a force for this meeting and pushed through a motion calling for negotiations with the Australian Railways Union and the Miners Federation with the aim of establishing a breakaway Industrial Labor Party.

The Democratic Socialist and Revolutionary Socialists were now hopelessly divided with the latter on the way out of the Party. McNamara set up a Committee of Twelve to organise a general Aggregate Meeting which adopted a resolution calling for further propaganda work inside the ALP.

When the Revolutionary Socialists' call for a breakaway party fell on deaf ears, they agreed to participate with the Democratic Socialists in a Joint Committee of 35. However, the two groups were soon in conflict again.

On August 19 three prominent members of the Revolutionary Socialists and a group of rank-and-file members announced their intention to join the CPA.

After that the ALP Executive also declared the Industrial Socialisation Committee of the Democratic Socialists to be bogus and warned that any association with it would lead to expulsion. Shortly afterwards the committee disbanded and the Units faded out of existence.

So ended a remarkable chapter in Australian labour history.

What lessons can be drawn for socialists in the Labor Party today?

The most important point to make is that the movement had no inherent weakness. By taking the Socialisation Objective as a starting point, its political framework was, inevitably, abstract. The objective was rhetoric, never intended to have practical significance. While the Units were able to use it for valuable propaganda work, they could not draw out of it a strategy for mobilising the working class in defence of its immediately perceived interests.

The difficulties the Units had in establishing themselves in the unions was probably as much due to this political weakness as to the obstruction of Lang's supporters.

The movement would have been far stronger had it been built on a program of action, starting with the defence of jobs and living standards in the Depression. Out of such a program would flow the need to nationalise (or socialise) leading enterprises. And out of such a movement would come clearer conceptions on what sort of Labor government is necessary to carry out such a program.

The Democratic Socialist wing obviously had real illusions in the willingness (or ability) of Labor parliamentarians to enact socialisation of industry by means of parliamentary decree. They had no strategy for mobilising the working class to carry out and defend such actions.

Their belief in the inevitable collapse of capitalism underestimated its resilience. And their hope that a fundamental social transformation could be carried out peacefully was naive, to say the least.

The Revolutionary Socialists, on the other hand, made ultra-left and sectarian errors. They too lacked a program to mobilise the working class and relied instead on radical-sounding pronouncements.

Despite these political weaknesses, the movement did

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Philippines election boycott

May 14 is the date for parliamentary elections in the Philippines. But these will be fake elections. The following analysis is reprinted from *Philippines Brief*, distributed by the Philippines Action Support Group.

Last November President Marcos announced that elections for the National Assembly would take place on May 14 this year.

The recent period in the Philippines has been one of considerable political turmoil, erupting onto the streets of Manila following the assassination of the former Senator Aquino on August 21. There has been a series of massive rallies organised by a coalition of opposition forces in JAJA (Justice for Aquino, Justice for All). As late as January 31 a rally attracted as many as 500,000 people.

Such a spontaneous mass groundswell of anti-Marcos sentiment has not been seen since the pre-marital law days of the early 1970s.

By allowing the elections to go ahead at this stage Marcos is obviously hoping to distract people's attention from the real power structure. Also knowing full well that some of the more conservative opposition groups are more likely to take the bait than others, he can expect that the elections will help divide the opposition movement.

Among the opposition forces there is certainly a lot of coming and going and jockeying for position. One group that has been depleted by the international media as being very prominent in the protest movement is UNIDO (United Nationalist Democratic Organisation). It is a political umbrella for 12 parties

Philippines Brief

The Philippines Brief is produced by the Philippines Action Support Group (FASG) to assist understanding of events in the Philippines especially as they relate to Australia. The FASG's are a national network of people working in support of Filipinos who are working for freedom and democracy in the Philippines. FASG's can be contacted at:
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Demonstration in Manila against Marcos' elections

and includes Aquino's former party, the Liberal Party.
From its heyday in the post-war period, up to the election of Marcos in 1965, during which it had produced 5 of the 6 presidents, the Liberal Party had dwindled to an almost non-existent force by the time of Aquino's attempted return from the USA.

Likewise, the Nacionalista Party, under which Marcos was first elected as President, has also lost most of its base during the period of political polarisation following martial law.

The nominal leader of UNIDO, Salvador Laurel, is trying to promote UNIDO as the main opposition group but already divisions have opened up. The Nacionalista Party and a section of the Liberal Party have announced that they are not part of UNIDO. UNIDO also still disagrees among itself on such basic issues as its leader, the US bases, the Constitution and what to do with the economy.

UNIDO represents a section of the wealthy elite which has been excluded from power since Marcos consolidated his position under martial law. Some of the parties in UNIDO represent regional interests, but its lack of national organisation is another big weakness.

There are a number of nationalist groups which have developed recently. One of these is the Nationalist Alliance for Justice, Freedom and Democracy which was launched in November last year. Its origins go back to the multi-sectoral organisation of the 1981 spearheaded the boycott of the 1981 presidential elections, and includes some of the more progressive elements

on JAJA.

It is led by former senator Tanada, a long-time champion of nationalist causes. The Nationalist Alliance calls for the dismantling of the US-Marcos dictatorship, the setting up of a coalition government and the nationalisation of basic industries.

It is still in the formative stages, and the relatively modest turnout of 10,000 people to its rally last December indicates that the mass anti-Marcos groundswell has not so easily been translated into an anti-imperialist one.

Another prominent figure who has consistently taken a strong nationalist stance is ex-senator Diokno. However, he is promoting another nationalist group, Kaakbay (Movement for Philippine Sovereignty and Democracy). Diokno is probably better known outside the Philippines that inside at this stage, and Kaabay has a fairly narrow base of professionals and business people.

One of the striking features of the anti-Marcos protests was the participation of the business community. They have been increasingly worried about the regime's financial policies, especially its huge \$25 billion foreign debt. So there has been the emergence of new business-oriented groups such as the Alliance of Metropolitan Associations (AMA), led by Aquino's brother, Batiz.

In spite of what the media likes to make out, undoubtedly the main opposition force in the Philippines is the NDF (National Democratic Front). It is an underground revolutionary movement which unites organisations of peasants, workers, youth and women, as well as

professionals.

It has links with the Communist Party of the Philippines and its armed wing, the New People's Army.

Over 15 years it has built up a network which covers a majority of the country's provinces, with 100,000 activists, and supporters numbering in the millions. It is this network which in fact provided the organisational strength of the recent mass rallies. And it is this that represents the main threat to Marcos and U.S. plans for the Philippines in the longer term.

The present political crisis also corresponds to a rapidly worsening economic situation. In addition to the flight of capital, devaluation, and rising unemployment, the International Monetary Fund has decided to delay granting loans to offset the massive national debt.

Presumably this was the U.S. way of trying to pressure Marcos to, among other things, be seen to have fair elec-

tions.

Another concern of the U.S. and certain business leaders is with an orderly succession to the presidency in the event of Marcos' demise. Marcos obliged them by having a plebiscite on January 27 which reinstated the position of vice-president.

But this is very much a cosmetic reform. The president still effectively rules by decree. Under the martial law Constitution of 1973, and the revisions made to it in 1981, Marcos retains the right to veto any bill passed by the National Assembly. He also has the right to enact his own laws, while the National Assembly has no right to veto any laws created by Marcos.

So in effect, even should the opposition forces win a sweeping majority, they would still not have the right to abolish the much detested Preventive Detention Order, to grant amnesty to political prisoners, nor to even make changes in the economic direction of

the country.

In addition, even though the assembly membership has been increased to 183 for these elections, the number of appointees has doubled to 40. So that for an opposition group to even gain a majority it must now win over 70 per cent of the contested seats.

These facts alone are enough to explain why there is an election boycott campaign. The Nationalist Alliance very early on advocated a boycott without conditions. But it modified its stance in order to achieve greater unity on the issue among the opposition forces.

In early January, a "united people's rally" was held to launch the approach of demanding that Marcos meet certain conditions before the opposition would participate in the elections.

Agreement was reached between groups as diverse as UNIDO, AMA, JAJA, Kaakbay and even the banned NDF. The six demands were that Marcos renounce the presidential legislative powers as well as the decrees which give the regime the authority to arrest at will; give general amnesty and release all political prisoners; that a two-thirds majority of Parliament be required in order to declare martial law or withdraw the writ of habeas corpus; that Parliament approves all senior Government appointments; along with demands relating to the elections, such as equal access to the media for all groups, new voters lists and no military involvement.

At the time of the rally UNIDO leader Laurel said that Marcos must offer "substantive compliance, not necessarily word-for-word compliance" with the demands. So far Marcos has only suggested that voter registration will be renewed and that he will not make further detentions in the period leading up to the elections.

It is commonly made out that the opposition is now hopelessly divided in the run-up to the elections. This may be so of the established conservative parties. But the real opposition in the Philippines cannot run in the elections. And after all, the elections, are only meant to provide a veneer of legitimacy to the Marcos government.

In the countryside, where most of the people live, the military atrocities continue. Regions that strongly support the boycott can expect military reprisals, as happened after the 1981 boycott campaign.

Whatever the success of the election boycott, and even if Marcos does not go quite yet, the opposition forces are in a good position to be strengthened in the process. The dynamic of post-Aquino events means that the militant and progressive groups can break out of the restrictions imposed by underground work and build an even more broadened base.

Australian aid to Marcos

The following was taken from a leaflet produced by the Philippines Action Support Group in Melbourne, titled *Australia aids Marcos*.

The Marcos Government rules in the Philippines through the violence of the armed forces against its people — arrests, torture, imprisonment, disappearances and murder. Australian Government military aid to the Philippines Government was \$A 1.3 million in 1982, up 45 per cent from 1979. We are supporting a military force that oppresses its own people.

The highly respected human rights organisation, Amnesty International, said in a 1982 report on the Philippines "The security forces of the Philippines have systematically engaged in practices which violate fundamental human rights including the right of security of person and the right against arbitrary arrest and detention."

Former Senator Aquino, brutally murdered last August, is one of thousands who have been killed since Marcos declared martial law 11 years ago. Many have disappeared and their bodies never recovered some time later. Others have never been seen again. On top of this 50,000 Filipinos have been arrested since martial law was declared in 1972.

Amnesty International made special mention of the widespread torture against those arrested by the military. Tens of thousands have been hamleted, that is, herded into refugee camps in order to flush out armed opposition to the Govern-

ment.
It is to support this military force that Australian aid goes.

In 1980-81, 115 Philippine military personnel were trained in Australia, almost four times more than the previous year.

Philippine air force personnel are trained in Queensland.

Six Australian technical advisors are based in the Philippines to train Philippine military in Australian Nomad aircraft maintenance that are part of the Australian aid.

In 1982, Philippine Defence Minister Enrile visited Australia to discuss expansion of Australian "defence co-operation."

Military spending in the Philippines has increased by over 800 per cent since 1972 and represents over 15 per cent of all Government expenditure. The military forces have increased sixfold to over 300,000 during that period.

Despite the overwhelming poverty of the country (over 64 per cent of the population lives in poverty), the amount of Government spending on defence is several times that spent on health care.

Church sources say that between January 1982 and March 1983, the following violations occurred: 1516 arbitrary arrests, 156 political killings, 42 disappearances.

In 1982, the Human Rights Committee of the Integrated Bar of the Philippines estimated that between 350,000 and 400,000 Filipino peasants have been forced off their land as a result of military operations.

central america

El Salvador elections

Embarrassing result for Reagan

The following article, by Greg Adamson and Renfrey Clarke, is reprinted from the April-May issue of *Venceremos* — bulletin of the Committee in Solidarity with Central America and the Caribbean.

In the wake of the first round of voting in the Salvadoran presidential elections, the United States strategy in Central America faces a serious crisis. Rather than the vindication of democracy which the U.S. Reagan administration hoped to sell to the United States public, the elections turned into an embarrassing farce.

These elections have been used as an excuse for introducing increasing numbers of U.S. military personnel into the region. Two weeks before the election, the U.S. administration announced that thousands of troops would begin military exercises on the border of Honduras and El Salvador.

Salvadoran opposition leader Ruben Zamora described this as a "provocation" and a new escalation of U.S. "intervention in El Salvador." Zamora estimated that some 2000 U.S. troops were involved in an area where Pentagon statements had stressed the lack of a clearly defined frontier between El Salvador and Honduras.

Towards the end of 1983, there were strong indications that the United States was preparing a large scale military intervention in El Salvador. Especially with the release of the Kissinger Commission report in January, there appeared to be broad unity among United States political leaders on the need for direct military action.

At this tense moment, diplomatic initiatives by the Nicaraguan Government, including the announcement of forthcoming national elections and a broad amnesty for many who had been involved in anti-government actions, began to undercut the United States Government's bluster.

At this moment the disastrous defeat suffered by the Marines in Lebanon destroyed the apparent unity around the Kissinger Commission report, and put United States plans back by months.

It was in this context that the Salvadoran elections occurred, and they give the United States little comfort.

An unofficial tally of the votes in the first round has given just over 44 per cent to Christian Democratic candidate Jose Napoleon Duarte, followed by D'Aubuisson with 29 per cent. Third place in the eight-person race is held by Francisco Guerrero of the right-wing National Conciliation Party, with 19 per cent.

These figures correspond quite closely to the results in the 1982 elections for the constituent assembly. In that poll, Duarte's Christian Democrats won the largest single block of seats, but did not command an overall majority. As runner-up, D'Aubuisson's Nationalist Republican Alliance (ARENA) was able to forge a coalition with a series of smaller parties, giving the ultra-rightists control of the chamber.

Since the purpose of these elections was to set the ground for further U.S. aid to the regime, the prospect of a victory for ultrarightist D'Aubuisson is not a pleasing one. D'Aubuisson has been named by former U.S. ambassador to El Salvador, Robert White, as the organiser of the assassination of Salvadoran Archbishop Romero.

Even the major international media have publicly recognised the climate of fraud and coercion in which the polls are being conducted. ARENA supporters have repeatedly threatened with violence and even with a military coup if D'Aubuisson is not elected.

"Chaos, confusion and dejection reigned," the Australians reported on March 28. "At least 100 stations in San Salvador never opened, because either the new electoral lists, the ballot papers, the ballot boxes, or all three, simply did not arrive." Tens of thousands of people gave up trying to vote, or were left in the long lines still outside many polling stations when the time allowed for voting ended.

Even when the polling closed, scandals continued to erupt. It was reported that the Christian Democrat vice-president of the Central Election Council, Roberto Meza Regardo, had marched into the computer room, accused a senior technician of being a member of ARENA, and ordered him out. The other technicians also left, and counting was suspended.

When results began to be posted, far behind schedule, irregularities quickly emerged. An initial announcement by the electoral council put ARENA ahead, but a revised count then had the Christian Democrats in the lead. Somehow, 671 votes had disappeared from the original tally.

Later, it was announced that a total of 70,903 ballots had been cast in La Paz province; the council, however, went on to change this figure to 45,968. The discrepancy was not explained.

Once the trend of the results had become clear, D'Aubuisson began a renewed effort to distance himself from

the death squads, apparently seeking to reassure the U.S. that he could be trusted with the presidency. On March 29 he condemned a statement issued by the most active death squad, the Secret Anti-Communist Army (ESA). In a communique delivered to a San Salvador radio station, the ESA had described the Central Election Council as "evil Salvadorans . . . playing the game of international communism."

In what has been described as an important concession to the Christian Democrats, D'Aubuisson also agreed that the computerised registry used in the voting should be dropped because so many names were missing.

U.S. President Reagan responded to the elections by praising the "valiant people" of El Salvador for "going to the polls." In what must surely have been a pre-prepared statement, Reagan declared: "It looks like the turnout is another victory for freedom over tyranny, of liberty over repression, of courage over intimidation."

In fact, the total of around 1.2 million people who voted was well below the 1.45 million claimed for the 1982 elections — despite the fact that voting is compulsory, and non-voters tend to be suspected of sympathising with the guerrillas. El Salvador's population is generally put at around five million people — suggesting that fewer than half of those eligible to vote actually did so.

The guerrillas of the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN) pledged that they would not take reprisals against anyone who chooses to vote, but they made it clear that they would not allow the army in areas under FMLN control under cover of the poll.

In Chalatenango province, a guerrilla stronghold, only 19,392 people were recorded as voting on March 26, compared with 55,871 in 1982. Overall, the FMLN claims to have stopped the "electoral farce" from being acted out in more than 89 of 261 towns in El Salvador.

For the "democratic" political bosses in the capital, this reflects an unnering statistic: that around a third of the population centres in El Salvador are now under the day-to-day control of the rebel opposition.

Rather than showing the "success of democracy" in El Salvador, the elections illustrate the dilemma faced by the Reagan administration today: it was a pretty poor show, but it's the best show they've got.

The United States Government cannot afford to lose in El Salvador, because a victory for the popular forces

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The people of Central America need your support



CISCAC is the national organisation of solidarity with the peoples of the region. It has the following aims:

- To oppose all imperialist intervention in Central America and the Caribbean and to champion the right of self-determination for the peoples of the region.
- To promote an understanding among the Australian people of the struggles of the peoples of Central America and the Caribbean against exploitation and repression, and to build solidarity with these struggles.
- To support the revolutionary governments of Cuba and Nicaragua, to defend the gains already made by the and to win recognition of the FMLN-FDR of El Salvador as the legitimate representative of the Salvadoran people.

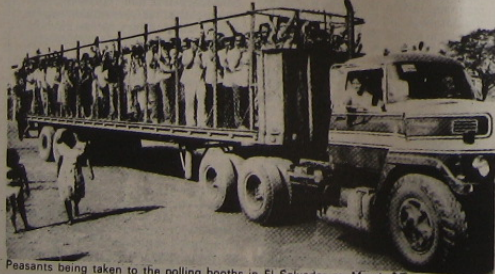
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Peasants being taken to the polling booths in El Salvador on March 25

union affiliations

Bank union's affiliation move

The following interview with Dawson Peate of the Australian Bank Employees Union was conducted for Labor Militant by Tony Brown, a member of the Public Service Association in NSW, and Roselle East ALP Branch.

Question: Dawson, can you give me some background on the Australian Bank Employees Union?

Answer: It covers 32,000 members nationally in the private and state bank areas. We are probably as close as you could get to an industry union. The only other union in the banking industry is the Commonwealth Bank Officers Association.

The ABEU is the seventh or eighth largest union in Australia. It's 64 years old. It is an ACTU affiliate. And as far as the membership profile is concerned, the average age is 36, with the average age of males being 30 and the average age of females being 22. The proportion of males to females is about 50:50.

Question: When did the union affiliate with the ACTU?

Answer: In December 1982.

Question: At a recent national conference the union began to discuss affiliation with the ALP. Can you give some background to this?

Answer: It's been the topic of consideration for quite some years now, because of the changing nature of the organisation. It has moved away from being seen as conservative career industry to being identified more as what it is — a clerical industry.

In political terms the union has changed from being a very conservative union. It was a supporter of the Liberal Party in the 1949 nationalisation campaign. Now the vast majority of the officials of the union, certainly those on a full-time, would be either ALP members or supporters. The vast majority of State Committee of Management delegates and Federal delegates would also be ALP supporters.

That's a fairly dramatic change. The union secretary in NSW two before me stood for preselection for the Liberal Party.

Question: Do you think that affiliation to the ALP would further develop that change?

Answer: Sure. In the same way affiliation to the ACTU did. That was also a dramatic shift.

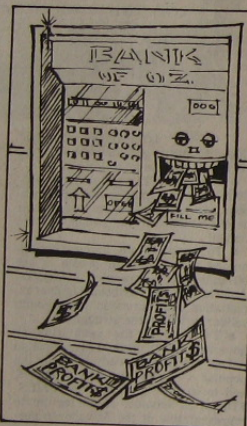
I've been with the ABEU for 12 years. When I joined it wasn't even called a union. It was called an association. It was a major exercise to simply change the name because people didn't want to be identified as unionists. They wanted to be identified as some sort of quasi-professionals, so the name association

appealed to them.

It was a major step forward, in our view, to call ourselves a union. The next step was to affiliate with the ACTU and join the mainstream of the trade union movement. I would see affiliation to the ALP a natural progression from there.

Question: Do you think that involvement in industrial action has helped to develop the consciousness of your members as unionists?

Answer: Yes I do. We had a lot more education when we had a lot more industrial action in the early 70's, before wage indexation. At one stage we were having almost non-stop wage campaigns and the ABEU was as militant



as any in the country. We even managed to win wage rises before the metalworkers' unions.

Then wage indexation came in in 1975 and from 1975 until 1979 we didn't have national industrial action at all.

Then when wage indexation began to break down in 1979 we had our first stopwork meeting in quite a while and a 24-hour stoppage. And that was not as well supported as the actions we held in 1974 and 1975.

Certainly the economic circumstances had changed. But my theory is that the members simply got out of practice between 1975 and 1979.

There is a high turnover rate in the industry (at one stage estimated at 25 per cent per annum). And the banks traditionally recruit school leavers who

have no perception whatsoever of an industrial campaign.

I think we are still in the same phase. Since 1979 we have had a couple of campaigns but we have not got back to the frequency of the early 70's.

I see this as a real problem for us. Apart from the working hours campaign we had over the last couple of years, the only issues around which we can really mobilise our members on a national basis are wages and working conditions.

We don't have a high level of dispute over working conditions because they are generally very good in this industry. If you look at the statistics, working conditions would only account for about one-third of national strike actions. So that leaves wages.

Question: How would you sum up the effects of wage indexation on your members?

Answer: It had good and bad effects. It gave the union the opportunity to concentrate on some issues other than wages. So we started to move into areas like occupational health and safety which we couldn't do before when wages campaigns consumed all our resources.

But lack of participation in industrial campaigns tends to make the union members less militant and less prepared to fight when the need arises.

In terms of real wages we have done as well as anybody else. The only real benefit for stronger unions now is that they can get the wage rises quicker than the others. In this regard we have done reasonably well.

Question: I believe that NSW legislation on funding of political parties has shown that banks have been generous contributors?

Answer: Yes. The banks have, of course, been traditional and generous supporters of the conservative parties going back before the 1949 nationalisation fight. The NSW public funding provisions have exposed that to a degree. For example the National Bank recently donated \$15,000 to the National Party. And the National Party has mentioned other sums.

These are, of course, just the up front contributions. I think a lot more are channelled through other avenues, through other organisations.

In addition to that you have got senior executives of banks as senior party officials. One example is Sir Robert Crichton-Brown, who was the chairman of the Commercial Banking Group of Sydney and is now on the board of the National Bank. He was, and as far as I know still is, the national treasurer of the Liberal Party.

So the banks take a very high profile in political activities. From our point of

view we see that as an argument in favour of us taking a higher political profile.

Question: So you see that as an argument for the ABEU affiliating to the ALP?

Answer: Yes, that is one reason. The other is the simple fact that the ALP is the largest union body in the country apart from the ACTU.

There are approximately 90 unions affiliated to the Party in NSW. If we affiliate we could have a significant delegation at ALP Conferences. We would be among the 12 largest affiliates. We are one of three of the 12 largest unions in the country that remain unaffiliated. The other two are the Administrative and Clerical Officers Association and the teachers' unions.

Question: How will the decision to affiliate to the ALP be made?

Answer: Eventually the decision must be made at a bi-annual conference of the union. But that doesn't mean we have to wait until the 1986 national conference. I expect discussions with Party officials will begin almost immediately.

Question: Is there any connection at all between your affiliation moves and the moves by the four right-wing unions in Victoria?

Answer: No, there is no connection at all.

People shouldn't get confused about this. The officials of this union have not had the sort of political connections that are alleged for officials of the four Victorian unions.

Question: Your union is opposed to recommendations of the Martin Report on deregulating banks and allowing the entry of foreign banks. Can you explain why?

Answer: It seems to us that the Australian finance industry and banking system is already doing pretty well in international terms. But that is partly because we have had Labor Government intervention at different times since the 1930's.

Australians had some pretty bitter experiences with banking collapses during the Depression and prior to that in the late 1800's. As a result of those experiences the Labor Government of Ben Chifley, in particular, steered through some major banking reforms that received overwhelming support from the public. Since then even the Menzies administration maintained that approach.

Obviously those regulations were not introduced without good cause. So we think there needs to be very strong arguments for those regulations being overturned. We haven't been convinced by any of the arguments put up so far.

The Whitlam Government introduced a Financial Corporations Act and our submissions to Government since that time have called for regulations covering all financial institutions to be placed



The money market at the NSW State Bank. The floating of the Australian dollar has already increased operations in this area

on an equal footing.

The argument being used to support deregulation is that the banking sector has been disadvantaged by regulations and it has lost its market share in comparison to building societies and other institutions. But if you apply the same regulations to all institutions then that argument is overcome.

We also don't accept the simple argument that the banks' market decline is indicated by a drop in savings bank operations while building societies and credit unions have been expanding theirs. The banks have also been diversifying their operations into areas like credit cards, into travel and merchant banking.

So if you look at all the operations they have expanded greatly. So I think the argument that the banks are being disadvantaged needs to come under greater scrutiny.

In respect to foreign banks we have two main concerns:

The first one is that many of these banks have quite horrendous industrial relations records. Some are notoriously anti-union.

I think there are these sort of problems with other corporations that operate on a transnational basis. Perseus McDonalds, and its exploitation of cheap young labour, is a good example.

Our second concern is about the ef-

fects of the further integration of the Australian finance industry into the international system.

I was only reading in the paper yesterday about the problems faced by Argentina with transnational bank loans that add up to a multi-million dollar debt. Argentina hasn't even been able to pay the interest on these loans for three months and the same thing is happening to other countries like Brazil and Mexico.

The problem in Mexico is so severe that the Government there nationalised the banks. The Philippines is another example, and the list goes on.

If there are no regulations at all the transnational banks will be able to get hold of Australian deposits to feed into their international networks.

Question: What effect could the foreign banks have on working conditions?

Answer: They could have a very bad effect if we cannot unionise them. For example, Barclays is a prime contender for a licence and it has made it clear it would operate on Saturday mornings. We managed to dispense with Saturday morning banking back in 1962 and have held that line with the Australian banks, even though some wanted Saturday trading reintroduced.

The foreign banks might also try to attack other established working practices and conditions.

reviews

The Battle for Bermondsey

The Battle for Bermondsey
By Peter Tatchell
Heretic Books, 1988

The Battle for Bermondsey tells the story of attempts by socialists in the British Labour Party to revive militant traditions of the labour movement in the docks area of South London and to restore open and democratic practices within the local constituencies of the Party.

Helen Boyton
Member Auburn Central (NSW) ALP Branch

The battle really began when Peter Tatchell was selected as the Labour Party candidate for the seat of Bermondsey on a militant platform based on a commitment to implement agreed Labor Party policy. He campaigned for greater accountability of parliamentarians to the local Party structures and community; withdrawal from the European Economic Community and NATO; British troops out of Ireland; extended public ownership under workers' control; a 35-hour week; an end to the use of nuclear power; abolition of private medicine; democratic control of the police; positive action for women and ethnic minorities; repeal of racist immigration laws; unilateral disarmament; and a new international economic order to secure development and justice for the exploited countries of the world.

The presidential election was brought on by the threatened resignation of the sitting member, Bob Mellish. Mellish was a classical old guard, right winger whose machine had taken control of the Bermondsey Party structures in the post-World War II years. His corrupt and undemocratic practices had ensured the degeneration of the Party in this area. It had become little more than a small circle of people dedicated to the task of returning Mellish to Parliament and Labour members to the Southwark Council.

Mellish resigned his seat in order to take up a position on the London Docks Redevelopment Authority — a body set up by the Tories to oversee massive redevelopment of the docks area. He offered Salter, and his wife, a house for either blocks and expensive penthouses at the expense of public housing and open space.

In planning their campaign to revive the Labour Party in Bermondsey, Tatchell and his supporters drew inspiration from the first Labour MP for the area, Alfred Salter, and his wife, Edith. Alfred Salter had been a militant socialist who had played a leading role in many working class struggles in the

district, including the 1936 General Strike. Under his leadership, the Labour Party had successfully campaigned for an impressive array of public amenities. Ada Salter was the first woman elected as a London councillor and subsequently the first woman mayor.

However, within a month of Tatchell's selection as the parliamentary candidate, the national Labour Party leadership launched its attack. The right of the local constituency Party to select its own candidate was cast aside.

This attack was led by the then leader of the Labour Party, and former leader of the Tribune group, of Left MPs, Michael Foot. Foot attacked Tatchell for expressing the view that extraparlimentary struggles are both legitimate and necessary for the implementation of a socialist program and branded him a reckless headstrong revolutionary intent on destroying parliamentary democracy.

Presumably Michael Foot thought he would strengthen his own position by leading the attack on Tatchell. The Right certainly appreciated the fact that the grandmaster of the Left was prepared to launch an attack on the new wave of socialists.

Yet while Foot was doing the dirty work for the Right, the Right was plotting his removal as Party leader. And some of those who demanded a purge of the Left later defected to the Social Democratic Party.

In his fight to stand for Bermondsey in the by-election, Tatchell was subjected to a vile, calumnious, and hysterical campaign by the British press. Rupert Murdoch's Sun was in the forefront with headlines such as "Pretentious Peck" and statements like "Peter Tatchell symbolises everything that is appalling in the Labour Party today."

The press made much of Tatchell's support for gay rights in a slender campaign that lasted from the time of his presidential in November 1981 until the by-election in February 1982.

Despite the combined opposition of the press and the majority of the party leadership Tatchell was able to maintain strong support in the Bermondsey constituency. The Party members insisted that he should be their candidate and Foot and the Right had to back down.

But that did not stop the majority on the Party's National Executive Committee from sabotaging Tatchell's campaign. In fact it became clear during the campaign that they wanted Tatchell to lose.

The day before the by-election the NEC voted to expel five members of the



Peter Tatchell. His prescription for Bermondsey caused a brawl in the British Labour Party. Preface to his book is by Tony Benn

Militant tendency. Tatchell was not a supporter of the Militant newspaper but the press and his opponents had made sure that he was identified with the Militant supporters in the public consciousness. The result of the by-election was an overwhelming loss for Labour and victory for the Liberal candidates.

Tatchell's brand of "grass roots community socialism" rather overstates the ability of community struggles to break "the structure of power and wealth." But despite such weaknesses, his effort to breathe new life into the Bermondsey Party and turn it into an "upward-going and campaigning socialist organization" has been an important contribution to the fight for a Labour Party that might truly represent the interests of working people.

This book contains many lessons for Labor Party activists in both Britain and Australia.

It demonstrates the political bankruptcy of the present leadership of the BLP, the dangers of promoting popular policies, like unilateral nuclear disarmament, in the lead-up to the 1982 general elections, the Party leadership concentrated its efforts on withdrawing the Left out of the Party. As a result many working people turned their backs on the Party and Thatcherism was given an extended life.

All that election a perfectly "respectable" Labour candidate for Bermondsey did no better than Tatchell in the by-election.

victorian conference

Labor Unity avoids debate

The Victorian ALP State Conference in March did not live up to expectations. Hawke's right-wing Labor Unity faction refused to debate the Left on uranium, foreign policy or the applications for affiliation to the Branch of four unions dominated by the National Civic Council.

Richard Lane Member of Kennington (Vic) ALP Branch, ATEA delegate to ALP State Conference

Labor Unity has good reason to avoid debate. When issues have been debated at past Conferences, the Left has always won the argument and gained support. Hawke's faction is not interested in debating issues for the sake of clarification. Its major effort in Victoria is directed at trying to stack out future Conferences with delegations of right-wing hard-raisers, like those that predominate in NSW.

It will be a different matter at the National Conference in July. This unrepresentative body will be dominated by Hawke's Cabinet and his supporters in Government.

However, on this occasion Labor Unity delegates did not even bother to

vote against a motion calling for a halt to all uranium exporting from July 1, 1984; and for a total ban on uranium from those countries involved in developing nuclear weapons, reprocessing uranium fuel for use in nuclear weapons, and those that have not signed the nuclear non-proliferation treaty. Perhaps the left was able to make some propaganda use out of the fact that its strong anti-uranium policy was adopted unanimously.

Resolutions were also passed opposing the ANZUS alliance and U.S. bases in Australia, calling for Party policy on East Timor to be implemented, opposing aid to the Marcos regime in the Philippines; and opposing U.S. war plans in Central America.

The Right was obviously more interested in the outcome of the debate on the affiliation applications of the NCC unions. But even on this question Labor Unity did not make the running. It didn't need to. Premier John Cain, a member of the so-called Independent faction, did the job for it.

When Cain spoke Conference had already accepted an executive resolution to establish a committee of 10 to examine the affiliation applications. But Cain took advantage of his speech to the

Conference to make it clear he favoured acceptance of the affiliations. Cain's main argument was that the matter should be settled without a fight. And he warned directly that if the Victorian Branch did not accept some form of compromise the National Executive would step in.

He argued that the Party in government must display more unity and discipline to prevent internal disputes damaging its electoral standing. Yet his proposed solution — to allow some NCC supporters into the Party — is hardly likely to improve the prospects for unity. And it will not improve the electoral image of the ALP.

The Committee of Inquiry is composed of five members of the Socialist Left, four from Labor Unity and one Independent. It appears most likely that it will split 5 to 5.

But now the Socialist Left is coming under enormous pressure to accept a compromise — probably involving the acceptance of the two smaller unions, Senator Don Grimes, who voted against Federal intervention when the matter came up at a National Executive meeting, attended the Conference and made it clear to 80 leaders that he, too, expected a compromise.

western australian conference

Parliamentarians in minority

At the April 3 Western Australian Conference, called to decide policy for National Conference, it often seemed that the parliamentarians present could not win a trick.

Barry Healy Member of ANZSU and Wanneroo (WA) ALP Branch

From the issue of Telecom ownership of the Aussat satellite, to abolition of ASIO, to stopping uranium mining, the Conference repeatedly rejected the counter-revolutionary positions of such luminaries as Senator Peter Walsh, Graham Campbell MLC and Minister for Aviation Kitt Bosley.

The mood of the Conference was strongly anti-uranium. Peter Walsh denied to repeatedly provoke a strong response by pressing the support for mining. His contribution to the debate sparked the most spirited heckling of the whole Conference.

Neil Bartholomew, a well-known environmentalist in the Party, moved a lengthy amendment to the officers' remuneration which appeared to lead up to opposition to mining.

After heated opposition from Walsh and others, the Conference overwhelmingly endorsed the Bartholomew amendment. That was supposed to be the close of business for the day.

But then John Dawkins dramatically seized the microphone to ask Bartholomew for clarification. His question was about the status of Roddy Downer: is it "an existing mine" (that is, to be phased out) or a "new mine" (that is, to be prevented from opening).

Bartholomew replied that, according to existing Federal policy, Roddy is an "existing mine."

This statement was seized upon by Dawkins to put in the game claiming that the clear anti-uranium sentiment of the Conference was in fact support for mining.

Dawkins' antics stimulated some support of the Conference and confused and angered many Party activists.

According to Dawkins' version of the Conference motion which he set out the existing mines "which is not to go" means that mines which are open, can be fully developed and then phased out.

His public performance found the oppo-

sition of the Conference and demonstrates the influence of wide parliamentary tactics: using a lawyer's expertise to interpret Conference motions in order to influence conflict in the Party.

One area of controversy at the Conference was support for the PSD, PSLB in El Salvador. The Conference resolved to condemn the human rights violations of the Salvadoran Government and concluded that any peace settlement must include the PSD, PSLB.

A motion calling for the abolition of ASIO was adopted overwhelmingly. Conference took the view that the withdrawal of David Cooke and the Douglas Robertson Hotel had indicated that the secret police are beyond the control of Labor parliamentarians and are used against the labour movement.

Many specific items were allowed for lack of time. A special State Executive meeting on April 26 will decide these.

These the postponed opposition to the Federal conference vote on abolition, stored by WA Labor Women, and opposition to the constitution of NCC, dominated unions in Victoria will be taken up.

Legal test for affirmative action

Thirty six women in the Wollongong area have taken legal action to win back their jobs in the BHP/A&S steelworks. They were among over 300 women who gained their jobs after the 1980/81 Jobs for Women campaign.

Fat Brewer
Member of Forest Lodge (NSW) ALP Branch and AMFSU

The women were among hundreds of steelworkers sacked in 1982 and 1983. Although these sackings were carried out according to strict gate seniority, the women argue that their seniority should be measured from the time they applied for a job, not from the time the company finally lifted its ban on the employment of women.

On May 16 the initial meeting of legal representatives for the women and the company will take place. Following that the Anti-Discrimination Tribunal will hold hearings in Wollongong.

This case will be of great importance to women throughout Australia as it could extend and strengthen the ability of women to use of anti-discrimination legislation to gain jobs in traditionally male areas of work and keep them. The case will test the legislation on both direct discrimination and the present effects of past discrimination.

Because the women are taking joint action, it will also determine whether the legislation enables groups of women in similar circumstances to act together instead of individually. The case hopes to establish that an individual complaint, if successful, can be used by other women in similar situations as a representative case.

For these reasons it could expand the use of anti-discrimination legislation as an avenue for appealing against discrimination. This would represent a significant gain in the fight for equality.

Most of the women involved in the Jobs for Women campaign had been migrants from Macedonia, Turkey, Latin America and Greece.

With the onset of the recession and the consequent massive job losses in the steel industry, they were among the first to be sacked. The 36 women who filed their complaints with the Anti-Discrimination Board during 1983 argue that affirmative action had to take into account the cumulative effects of discrimination.

This case is occurring at a very opportune time. The need for affirmative action legislation with regard to job access has been recognised by the Hawke Government. The Sex Discrimination Bill which was introduced into Federal Parliament in June last year included a section on affirmative action. However, this section was deferred pending a broader discussion and a green paper has been prepared on the subject. This



Some of the women involved in the 1981 Jobs for Women campaign. Now fighting to win back jobs

will be considered by the Government in May.

Affirmative action programs for job opportunities are necessary to open up the job market for women. Legislation to back up such programs has been found necessary in a number of countries. For example, such legislation has opened up jobs for women in the United States in areas such as mining and the oil and steel industries. It has been particularly important for gaining access to skilled jobs.

Jobs traditionally performed by women are being undermined by technical innovation and plant rationalisations. As a result, the continuing world recession is causing women's unemployment to skyrocket higher and faster than that of men.

Affirmative action and positive discrimination policies in jobs, education and training have been introduced in Britain and Sweden. Increasingly, the workers' movement in countries like Austria, Germany and Spain is seeking affirmative action programs as a way to overcome the effects of past discrimination and high female unemployment. Italian workers at Fiat car plants have made a significant gain when their unions forced the management to agree that 50 per cent of all new recruits should be women.

Women in the Wollongong district have faced many setbacks in the jobs campaign. Not only did they lose their jobs soon after winning them, they were denied legal aid to pursue their anti-discrimination case. The Legal Aid Review Committee rejected their application on the grounds that their case lacked "merit."

It is difficult to take on a multi-billion dollar monopoly like BHP when you have no job, don't speak the language and are a woman.

As the women have stated in a press

release:

"We wonder how many times we have to be discriminated against before we can correct the injustices we are suffering. We wonder how this legal body can make decisions on the 'merit' of our case when this particular section of the Anti-Discrimination Act has never been tested, never been taken up in the past, never reached the stage of a court case.

"We wonder why our case has no 'merit' when the legal advice we have had up until this stage indicates that the case is a good one and is important. We wonder about the use of these laws if, when a disadvantaged group like ourselves wants to seek redress under them, it is made extremely difficult for us through denial of legal aid."

Undeterred the women have kept up the struggle. They have resubmitted their case to the Legal Aid Commission and launched a fund appeal to help defray expenses.

Now that the case is finally about to be heard they need all the support they can get. They feel their case is important to all women and disadvantaged groups who have been denied equal access to work.

When these women won their jobs in the first place it was largely due to the support they received from the labour movement, the migrant community and the women's movement. They need that sort of support again to reaffirm their initial victory.

If you can help in any way, want further information or a speaker to address a meeting, or wish to send money or messages of support, write to Jobs for Women Action Committee, PO Box 1830, Wollongong 2500. Phone Robynne Murphy (042) 29 6502 (work) or 28 7892 (after hours) or Christina Trenea (042) 29 6502.