



Building a New Left Party for Australia

New Party Launching Conference set for Sydney, July 29 & 30

• You are invited to the New Left Party Launching Conference in Sydney for July 29 & 30 - read Comet pages 4 & 5 and see your regional contact for details.

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No numbers please

Let us hope that the July conference is able to make its decisions through the provisions of consensus. If some issues have to be decided on a for or against basis, the procedure must give every person who attends the conference the right to vote.

I agree with the proposal that each regional group outside Sydney should be allocated a number of votes in proportion to the number of signatories. In respect of the Sydney signatories they need to attend the conference to have the right to vote, bearing in mind that the conference is taking place in Sydney.

While this proposal has its limits, we need to bear in mind that it is impossible to develop an ideal voting system until the new left party is formally established. It would be a tremendous boost to the spirit of comradeship and unity growing if we all set out to work in a way that enables decisions to be made through debate and general agreement.

T. McDonald

Rainbow reader hits Comet!

It was disappointing to find your reporter, Marian Aveling, displaying the same level of wit and accuracy as the Fairfax or Murdoch press in her report of the Rainbow Alliance launch.

Surely with a little more assiduous reading of these papers, she could have come up with some "Peace grannies" or "lesbian mothers" to add to the dismissive categorising she used for people at the launch, judging, apparently, simply on dress and looks.

It was much more disturbing to find that she also was so busy putting people into these little categories that she completely missed the STALL [sic] marked UNIONS, staffed by a UNIONIST and stocked with a wide spectrum of UNION literature which was at the launch all afternoon. Your readership, I feel deserve accurate reporting, if the New Left Party is not to very soon resemble the old.

Chris Cathie.
Sandringham.

LETTERS

Give the silent a voice

There has been a lack of cohesion in the left almost from inception. Various parties pulling in different directions, causing a fragmentation that creates divisions.

The New Left Party is an attempt to draw these groups together. To act in concert, to create a force of like thinking people - to counter the erosion of socialist ideals that has occurred in the Australian Labor Party. A new well organised political party must emerge to counter the attacks on the working class, their salaries, their hard fought for life styles, their rights and their pensions. These people are being pushed aside, they are the back bone of this country, the majority of the population but they are the first sold out in the name of economics.

The left in the Australian Labor Party has declined. The few stalwarts of true left philosophy have battled on for socialist principles. But the influx of opportunists that have moved into the left, not to put forward a left view, but to further their own ends is now overwhelming. Left thinking is all but gone in the Labor Party.

Rhetoric

The purpose of the new party should be to "act". To do this we must get to where the hurt and disillusionment is, among the disadvantaged of this society. We must decentralise, get to the bread and butter issues to the problems that affect day to day living, such as law, consumerism, domestic violence, single supporting parents and more. However, we will never reach out to these people until we de-jargonise left politics.

The disenchantment of many ex Australian Labor Party people is incredibly large. When a blue ribbon Australian Labor Party area like Broadmeadows it has trouble getting a quorum at the branch meetings, there is something drastically wrong. We must meet the needs of these people and do it well, or else the left will die.

The New Left Party statement creating history for this country, let's all be a part of it.
L.Blundell

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Subscribe to your local group. For only \$10 (\$5 concession). Send to your regional NLP contact. See addresses & phone no.s this page.

DEADLINE:

Next issue - material to be in by July 15. Send to: P.O. Box 236 Collins St. VIC. 3000. or fax to J.Gray (03) 348 1794.

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Letters for The Comet should be no more than 100 words. Shorter letters would be preferred. All letters must be signed and the writer's name and address clearly written. A letter may be edited for reasons of space and clarity.

Feature articles for The Comet should be no more than 400 words. Shorter articles would be preferred. All articles must be signed and the writer's name and address clearly written. A letter may be edited for reasons of space and clarity.

Nungas repossess sacred land

Early this year Aboriginal people established a Protest Camp at Mounts Bay Road in Perth to protect sacred Aboriginal Land from the destruction posed by the State Government's redevelopment plan. The Construction, Mining and Energy Workers' Union at the same time put a ban on the site.

Aborigines initiated a court case against the West Australian Government, took out a Court Injunction to stop work from proceeding and appealed to the State Government to consult with Aboriginies to resolve the issue. Government Ministers Pam Beggs (Planning) and Carmen Lawrence (Aboriginal Affairs) have steadfastly refused repeated request to meet on site and negotiate.

The Old Swan Brewery at the site was the second brewery built in Perth and is about one hundred years old. It is part of an area of immense importance to Aboriginies because of the chain of water sources associated with Aboriginal religious beliefs about the Creation and the contemporary presence of the Living Spiritual Being - Waugal.

When the brewery was built, the Aboriginies had no legal standing to prevent its

construction. The site was registered under the Aboriginal Heritage Act of 1972 and was gazetted on 25 September, 1833 to be returned to Aboriginal people.

Alternative proposal

The Aboriginal people want the old brewery building demolished, the road straightened and the land turned into parkland for all people to enjoy.

The redevelopment of the brewery was to include a bicentennial gift to the Aboriginal people - an Art Gallery and Museum - this was to house Aboriginal Art and ARTifacts - from Queensland and the Northern Territory. The Aboriginal people of Perth would like an art gallery and museum but sited elsewhere and with art associated with West Australian Aboriginies.

This "gift" will destroy the very foundation of Aboriginal culture, while supposedly providing Aboriginies with a cultural complex.

The \$7.5m the State Government, the \$1.5 the Federal Government and the \$4.5m expected to be raised via the private sector is expected to fall well short of what is required, this being estimated to be \$25m at

today's prices.

ALP ignores international law

On 13 August, 1980, the Federal Government ratified the International Movement on Civil and Political Rights (Article 27) and so bound itself within the International Law to protect the rights of Australian Ethnic minorities to enjoy their own culture and to profess and practice their own religion.

By contributing financially to the project that is about to destroy the site and by refusing to use the Federal Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Heritage Protection Act to protect the site, the Federal Government is Breaching International Law.

The State Government will be going against the wishes of a large part of the Perth Community if it goes ahead with the proposed development. Many Community Groups are now involved in the struggle to get the Brewery building demolished and the land returned to nature. The area where the Brewery stands is on a stretch of extremely dangerous winding road and for this reason the Royal College of Surgeons Road Trauma Committee have become involved in a very positive way.

Union and green movements are natural allies, says Munday

Closer links need to be forged between the green and union movements for the Left to remain politically relevant, according to the urban environmentalist Jack Munday.

Speaking to more than 500 people at a NLP St.Kilda branch meeting held to discuss the effect of development in the bayside suburb, he said the ecology crisis had changed the political agenda. All political groups had to face the new reality of accepting ecology as a day-to-day issue, along with wages and mortgage rates.

Munday said the challenge for the Left lay in shaking off the mythology and divisions of the past where worker and environment movements were cast as separate groups with separate goals.

Struggles

He said conservative forces had driven wedges between what should have been natural allies. "In my struggles in the union and environment movements I was always confronted by this contradiction, fostered by opportunistic politicians, corporations and government bureaucracies trying to force people to decide between environment or jobs," he said.

"But we want both: an environment fit for ourselves and socially useful employment."

Munday said co-operation between the enlightened middle and working classes in common action over urban envi-



ronment issues in the 1970s had led to successful Green Bans in Sydney saving more than 100 buildings in the city from demolition. Such common action had also led to the electoral success of the Green Independent candidates in the recent Tasmanian elections.

Rebirth

Munday said the union movement's future depended on it broadening its concerns beyond the economics of the hip-pocket nerve and taking on the issues of urban and nature conservation. He said current actions by unions in Sydney, Adelaide, Darwin and Mel-

bourne over developments threatening the urban environment, signalled a rebirth of the Green Bans.

He said the birth of the New Left Party was also a sign of hope, because there was a need for the Left in Australia to develop a new type of politics which broke from the 'arrogant' belief that humans had to conquer nature to be productive.

He said, "I do feel there's a need for a New Left Party that retains a confidence of the ideas of the Left."

Naming the new

WOT'S IN A NAME?

What's in a name, you say? Well, for the New Left Party, probably a lot. The name will be seen to symbolize our hopes, our aspirations, our politics. It will do a lot in terms of attracting or repelling members and the Australian public at large. And, it's bound to be one of the most controversial and difficult decisions we face.

At the National Sponsors' meeting, I canvassed a number of possibilities. An obvious choice is New Left Party. While this has become, by default, our interim working title, does it sound too reminiscent of the 1960s? Will people think we're simply nostalgic for the halcyon days of our youth (or at least the youth of some of us)?

And, if we wanted to bear history in mind, perhaps we could do worse than take up the mantle of the main left party in Australia prior to World War I - The Australian Socialist Party or ASP for short. We could become a viper in the breast of Australian capitalism!..

Maybe we could SLAP (Socialist Left Action Party) the ruling class in the face. If we favoured a friendlier name, how about PAL (People's Action League) or CHUM (Combined Humanists, Unionists and Marxists). And, of course, it would be crucial to decide whether we're REDs (Radical Environmentalists for Development) or PINCS (People's Independent National Coalition).

Some comrades favour ASAP (Australian Socialist Action Party). Certainly, for me, and I'm sure many others, a new party can't come soon enough! A catchy name will

certainly give a fillip to the process.

Comrades at the national meeting thought long and hard and came up with:

- SUPA - Socialist Unity Party of Australia
- NLP - New Left Party
- RSUP - Real Socialist Unity Party
- GAL - Green Australian Left
- Gondwana Party
- Australian Socialists
- The Australian Left
- Brand New Left
- Green Alliance
- Earth Fair
- Future Works
- Democratic Green
- Left Renewal
- Solidarity

Some of the questions we'll need to bear in mind in this process are: should the name include the word 'socialist' and/or the word 'party.' Should we aim for a one or two word name. Should we try for an acronym.

If we are to opt for an acronym, perhaps we could do worse than adopt the Phillipino approach - adopt the acronym first and find the words later.

Let Comet know your views ... it's your name for the future.

by Carmel Shute

WHA

by David Winderlich
There are three types
"A Prism for Isms"
Bland".

A pr

The proponents of "up everything we see environmentalism, name that could do but is it possible?"

Lim

A lot of people want which reflects one traditions. The Marxist/Left, (there feminist, etc).

This would be a public cause an ideological use of double labels feminist reflect the one label can fully

Even the word "left" Bob Brown recent slogan "neither right describe the political

Calling ourselves Many dedicated wouldn't wear that ment. Besides we and we'd have to be



and launch

The Launching Conference. In Sydney on July 29 & 30 will be a week-end of discussions, seminars and workshops to examine:

- why we need a new party
- reports from policy commissions
- how to link different concerns such as ecology & economy
- party democracy
- campaign initiatives

There will also be plenty of time to relax and socialise. See your regional contact for details on how to attend.

PARTICIPATION AND VOTING

Participation and Registration

The national sponsors meeting in Melbourne in early April proposed for discussion that participation in the conference should be open to 'Time To Act' signatories who registered with their regional group by July 3. This was to enable good planning and to ensure that participants were genuinely committed and had been involved in the process.

The Preparatory Committee thought that this condition might be too restrictive, and that many people might hear of the conference, or only decide that they want to come, close to the conference date. It is also important that the conference have an open atmosphere. We therefore recommend that par-

ticipation be open to anyone who actually sign To Act' statement before the conference, or entrance door as they go in.

However, this openness should be linked to a there be a cutoff date (we suggest July 14) for of allocating voting quotas to regional groups ensure fairness in any votes which may need

Voting

As decided at the national sponsors' meeting mainly a conference of workshops and consensus making, with formal vote-taking restricted to issues where consensus may not be possible. It is important to agree on a fair voting system that, if votes need to be taken on important issues knows the established procedure beforehand avoid arguments at the conference itself about to be taken.

new party . . .

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Winderlich.
the three types of names we could choose -
for Isms", limiting labels, or "Broad and

A prism for isms

ponents of "prisms" want a name that sums
thing we stand for; socialism, feminism,
mentalism, land rights, gay rights, etc. A
t could do this would be bloody fantastic.
ossible?

Limiting labels

people want to call the NLP something
fects one of the socialist or progressive
s. The main contenders are Green or So-
ft, (there are real problems with gay,
etc).

ld be a public relations disaster and could
ideological bun fight within the NLP. The
uble labels like eco-socialist, and socialist
reflect the feeling of many people that no
can fully express their politics.

word "left" runs into the same problems.
own recently used the German Greens
neither right nor left but out in front" to
the politics of the Tasmanian Greens.

Overused

ourselves "Green" would be just as bad.
edicated and highly skilled unionists
wear that, even if they were pro-environ-
sides we would look very opportunistic
have to be quick to avoid getting knocked

over in the rush. Green looks set to become the
overused word of the nineties.

Put some ideas under the label of socialist or
Green or feminist and those same people will
recoil, their minds flooded with images of
"hippies" tying themselves to bulldozers and
zealots thrusting papers at them babbling about
some crisis that no one else has noticed.

If we are ever going to get anywhere; if we hold
any hope of building a mas movement that can
challenge capitalism and patriarchy we have to
see them as our constituency.

I don't think we should hide our politics, but I
don't see any point in using labels that have
many misconceptions and stereotypes attached
to them.

Broad 'n bland

I think we should choose a name that is as broad
as possible with the following characteristics:

- It should be mildly or potentially progressive,
- It should be broad enough to include all the
socialist and progressive traditions,
- It should not have negative connotations
- It should be fairly short, 3-4 word maximum.

Some words that meet these criteria are: Demo-
cratic, Independent, Community, Peoples Alli-
ance, Australian, National, Movement and Pro-
gressive. I'll even stick my neck out and suggest
some possible names.

Peoples Community Party

Independent Community Party
Australian Independence party
Progressive peoples Party
Australian Progressive Alliance
New Democratic Party
Australian Peoples Party
Radical Democratic Party

None of these names thrill me but neither do
names like Australian Labor/Liberal, Australian
Democrats or Communist Party of Australia.
None of these parties gained its influence be-
cause of a great name.

Open doors

A "Broad'n Bland" name will keep the doors
and the minds of ordinary people open for those
vital first few minutes. A sectional name will
close them.

I'm not arguing for a rejection of the proud
traditions of socialism. I don't think we should
ignore the current appeal of environmentalism
or the insights of the other progressive tradi-
tions. But we are not just creating a new party,
we are building a new politics.

We need a name that doesn't get in the way of
our policies, a name that we don't have to justify
to our constituency, a name that we can fill with
meaning, not one that we have to empty of
misconceptions.

Our name probably won't be brilliant but it must
be broad. Exactly what that name is really doesn't
matter too much after that. Ultimately it's what
we do rather than what we are called that counts.

(Editors' apologies for such savage
cutting for length. Abuse at will etc.)

atching it

actually signs the 'Time
ference, or at the confer-

linked to a condition that
July 14) for the purpose
regional groups. This will
a may need to be taken.

ers' meeting, this will be
and consensus decision
stricted to a few major is-
ossible. Nevertheless, it
ng system in advance so
important issues, everyone
beforehand. This will
ts itself about how votes are

The following are options which were discussed, their pros
and cons, and the reasons why they were rejected, or in one
case, preferred.

An "Open Conference"

Anyone attending the conference would be able to vote. This
would have the advantage that anyone who made the effort to
come would feel a full and equal participant.

Representative Voting

It was concluded that some form of representative voting
would be the only way to ensure that any votes taken would
fairly represent all those involved around the country, and at
least have the potential to also fairly represent different con-
stituencies and interest groups (eg, women, unionists,
environmentalists, etc.).

The main argument raised against any representative system is
that it would create two classes of people present: those able

to exercise a vote and those not. After much discussion, the majority
view was that this problem is outweighed by the undemocratic conse-
quences of a completely open conference. Several possible represen-
tative systems were looked at:

Proxy Voting

Plural Voting

Proportional Representation of Regions

Preferred Options

After much discussion, the Preparatory Committee meeting in early
May decided that it preferred the linked options of:

* participation being open to all those signing the statement up to the
conference, with registration preferred by July 14.

* votes being allocated to regional groups in proportion to the number
of signatories by July 14, with each group deciding how these votes will
be distributed to representatives.

This representative voting system could also be combined with the
taking of "straw votes" of all those present on major issues to see
whether there is an overwhelming consensus and to test the views of
conference participants. However, if formal votes are required, only
mandated representatives would vote.

Tasmania divided

Tasmanian society has been polarised since the seventies over a false argument that says you can have either development or a healthy environment. But the issues of jobs and environment can not be separated, to sustain future generations.

The need to build on agreement

We recognise that some groups involved in the Tasmanian election have positive positions on these issues. But solutions require a willingness to talk, to develop understandings and build on existing points of agreement. Environment organisations need to talk with those of the industrial left and work towards agreement on a development strategy.

Industry strategy vacuum

In an earlier period heavy industry was the way forward. If big was good then bigger was better. Tasmania's hydro electric industrialisation strategy was able to play an important role in luring such industry to the state. This strategy has globally outlived its usefulness, with no effective strategy to replace it.

In this decade the Tasmanian Development Authority has failed as an instrument of industrial policy. It has concentrated on attracting marginal industry with loan guarantees, tax concessions and subsidies. The crisis continues. In Tasmania this has meant massive levels of unemployment, particularly for young people, underemployment of women, an increasingly alienated aboriginal people, an education system marked by cutbacks, pockets of ineptitude in leadership and subsequent poor moral among teachers and students, as well as environmental destruction.

The priorities

We see four inter-related priorities which require both urgent and strategic action. These are:

- * The need to protect the environment.
- * Building a diverse industrial base to increase employment, including the rectification of the underemployment of women, and to increase job opportunities for young people.
- * We should recognise the Tasmanian Aboriginal people as the original owners of

the land on which we live. Their modest land rights claims should be granted in full, as should their right to cultural identity.

* We should ensure that resources are committed to making education opportunities available to all.

The way forward

The means by which these priorities can be addressed must be based on intelligent, informed debate as opposed to the Liberal Party's confrontationist approach. There is a need to involve workers, unions and community in social and industry planning which is environmentally sound. The extension of democracy to schools and to the workplace is seen as a key concept in this process.

Science and high technology are compatible with the environmental imperative. The NLPG believes that a viable Tasmanian economy can be founded on a diversified industrial structure in which knowledge based industries play an important role. Environmental high technology combined with research can be an industry in itself.

Struggle against racism in W.A.

Since 1984 Perth has been inundated with racist posters. There is hardly a stop sign or a bus stop that's not defaced with posters saying "Asians Out", "White Revolution the Only Solution", "Is Your Street Still White?" and "Holocaust a Media Cover Up".

The Australian Nationalist Movement has pursued a very simple tactic - make the message simple, repeat it and repeat it.

Over the last few years several groups, including CARE (Campaign Against Ra-

cial Exploitation) and WARE (West Australians Against Racial Exploitation), have attempted to counteract the A.N.M.'s propaganda. They have been involved in poster runs and organising Rock Against Racism concerts. Unfortunately, the A.N.M. has been relatively successful in intimidating their opponents.

The WA New Left Party Group, along with other anti racist groups have got behind the idea of forming a broadly based anti racist, anti-facist group, something like the Anti-Nazi League in England during the seven-

ties. So far we have been able to drum up interest across a very wide range of organisations, particularly in the ethnic and Aboriginal Communities. We are looking at establishing an annual concert/fair/rally in the early summer and a public clean up campaign along with a steady flow of information, speakers, badges, etc.

Most people involved feel that this project will be successful simply because people have had a gut full of the visual violence that the A.N.M. put so much faith in.

If you are in WA and wish to be involve please contact Carl/Coryn on 361 6521.

Please note our new address at P.O. Box 1277, East Victoria Park, 6101.

HUNTER GROUP AIMS FOR A TONNE

by Greg Giles.

The Hunter New Left Party Group is organising a workshop/seminar on "Democracy, Elections and Government - A New Strategy for a New Party". The Hunter Group is co-ordinating the Commission on this, and the seminar will prepare material to be submitted to the Launching Conference in July. Many people with experience as local councillors, as successful election campaigners, and in campaigning for other parties and organisations will be invited. The seminar is

in Newcastle on Saturday June 24. Other details have yet to be finalised, but further information can be obtained from Greg Giles (049-61 1105) or Chris Dodds (049-26 3028). Any written contributions or suggested references for this Commission can be sent to Chris or Greg at the Hunter contact address - a.s.a.p.

The Hunter Group has also discussed new party structures, and after the Launching Conference it is planned to organise a series

of functions for special target groups - teachers, the community sector, women, environmentalists, trade unions, etc. As well as encouraging new members it will help establish a dialogue with activists in these crucial areas.

Although over 50 people have endorsed the "Time to Act", this is still well short of the 85 who belonged to the Charter campaign. We hope to crack the magic 100 before the Launching Conference. See you there.

The housing crisis - still with us after all these years

An issue which has been much discussed but has not been resolved

on the left is the question of public versus private home ownership. Should we follow policies which are aimed at eventual public ownership of all housing? Is public housing to be used as a temporary measure which we get people out of as quickly as possible? Or do we provide an adequate level of public housing for those who truly choose it?

A seminar titled "The Housing Crisis" was held in Melbourne on 21 May. Colin Jones from the Western Suburbs Housing Group said the housing "crisis" was not new. "... For many people inadequate, expensive, overcrowded or no housing is not a new experience, but rather a continuing experience." He said the housing problem does not cease when confined to the poor. It just becomes invisible.

He said most of the Federal and State government's moves to ease the effects of the housing "crisis" were aimed at easing pressure on the private property market.

Public housing had declined since the sixties and had been largely ignored by governments. He said ten per cent of the land released in Maribynong by the Federal Government was reserved for public housing. "The Victorian Urban Land Authority has refused to purchase the Maribynong site... and so it will be sold to private speculators/developers and the land may not be developed in the short term. This land release will therefore do nothing to increase the availability of affordable housing for people in low and medium income, even for those who want to become owner occupiers".

He said that both state and federal policies have "led to public housing being perceived as welfare housing, and the stigma of being a public housing tenant increasing."

He said a New Left Party should develop a

Fremantle NLP in full force

There were film producers, writers, poets, artists, union leaders and psychologists at the New Left Party meeting held in Fremantle. Local film producer and party organiser Martha Ansara said 75 people attended the meeting.

Well-known Fremantle couple, film-maker Madelon Davis and writer Jack Davis, have joined the new party and feel very strongly about it. "We feel it is time people had the choice of an alternative party that gives them the opportunity for more justice in their lives." Ms Davis said. "With this party

housing policy that "enables people to look upon their housing as their home, one in which they can stay in as long as they wish and in which they have an element of control". He urged the NLP to ensure that all policies were integrated when formulating housing policies.

Contentious

Terry Burke, a senior economics lecturer from Swinburne Institute warned the group that what he had to say could be contentious. He was right. He said the housing crisis had developed so rapidly that the left has not formulated a position. He urged the NLP to consider housing policies in conjunction with economic, industrial and social justice policies.

He said the immigration rate should be slowed until the housing crisis was solved and better schemes for settling migrants were established. He said the increase in immigration over the last five years from 50,000 to 130,000 was too rapid. He said, "...part of the trouble is that most migrants settle in Melbourne and Sydney" two cities which are already suffering from population pressures.

Burke said the ALP policy of attracting business migrants was a very poorly monitored scheme. "The money business migrants bring in is not going into productive enterprises. Instead it is going into speculation in property pushing up housing prices still further".

people can make changes to the existing policy that is destructive to our environment."

Speaking for his people, Jack Davis said Aborigines had lost faith in Liberal and Labor and the New Left Party offered them an alternative.

Issues of concern include racism, women and disadvantaged groups, nuclear power and environment. Some have criticised the party for breaking away from existing political parties and others see red when they hear the word Left. But Ms Ansara said this Left was very different because environment was central to every issue it confronted.

He also criticised the Capital Gains Tax which exempted profits made on the sale of owner occupied homes. He said the wealthy could realise a substantial capital gain and a subsequent increase in wealth by investing in their own home then selling. Working parents with little spare time or income were disadvantaged. Those renting were out of the race altogether.

He said the property boom was being driven by the tax and caused a negative distribution of wealth to the rich.

Kate Shaw, a resident opposing high rise developments in a Melbourne bayside suburb, said residents could save community housing against developers..

Pressure

In St. Kilda 75% of the dwellings are flats and 66% of the population are tenants. Pressures on housing and rental prices has caused a 110% increase in rents - the poorest are moving out, the yuppies are moving in.

Two years ago a group of councillors were elected on a platform of preserving St Kilda's socio/economic character. They have helped residents oppose the hi-rise development and in doing so are running very close to having their planning authority taken away by the State Government. Those in Queensland and New South Wales will be familiar with this tactic.

Building unions have supported the residents. by placing bans on some demolitions and developments. She said the residents and their Council would have had little negotiating power with the developers if the unions had not opposed the developer's plans.

by Colin Jones

"This is a new kind of Left Party with a very profound vision. The Left was based around the contradiction of capital and labour and now we see that you cannot separate the contradiction of environment and development," she said. "Things have changed and people must take on the environment issue on a more personal level." she said.

The party initiated a seminar in Fremantle in March this year to bring together environmental activists and trade unionists. Called Red meets Green, a result of that seminar was union groups and the Australian Conservation Foundation working more closely.

Reprinted from the **Freemantle Gazette**. 25.4.89 (edited for 'Comet')

COMET FEATURES

Radical alternative to the Accord

Discussions to develop policy ideas for the workshops to be held at the Sydney Launching Conference have begun. The Sydney Industrial/Economic Commission has looked at the issues coming up at the ACTU Congress and broader policy issues. It was decided to examine New Left Party sponsor and political economist Frank Stilwell's views of the Accord.

A Radical Alternative?

In his book, "The Accord and Beyond," (Pluto Press, 1987),

Stilwell projects a programme which uses the Accord as a "stepping stone" for a radical alternative to a policy increasingly seen as conservative and little more than wage restraint.

Such a programme begins from the simple, yet not often articulated, proposition that a desirable economic system, "is one that ensures its resources - human, natural and manufactured- are used in the interests of society as a whole." Capitalism's inefficiency at such resource management clarifies the need for a system based on production for use, rather than profit. Such a system needs an appropriate mechanism for planning in which resource allocation becomes explicitly political and the guiding principle one of democracy... "hence democratic socialism."

As democracy is, "...systematically violated by the very structure of the capitalist economy" by the coercive and non-symmetrical relations of capital and labour in production, the alternative demands the extension of democracy from the parliamentary to all aspects of life, particularly in the workplace.

A socialist economy is not a panacea, as existing examples attest, and, (in a timely forethought), "the danger of statism, of authoritarianism, even of totalitarianism, is always present." A transitional programme is needed which builds in democratic involvement, unlike the "top-down" processes of the Accord.

Bridgeheads

Such a transition is the key to the difference between a reformist approach and one in which reforms play a role in generating the conditions for transformation of the system. A transitional programme does not reject reforms on the grounds that they do not embrace a revolutionary vision, they are a part instead of "constructing bridgeheads for socialism" within the system as a result of popular mobilisation. As examples Stilwell cites two capitalist institutions which will be needed in some form in a transformed economy; tariffs and the arbitration system.

The Accord has gone some way in stressing comparative wage justice and the rights of labour to economic benefits arising from increased productivity through arbitration ... these need to be built on as a basis for regulation of a wider range of incomes.

Alternative Package

A policy package is sketched, subject to the participation of the community and workers, which goes to eleven points which can only be listed here: Interventionist Industry Policy; Increased Social Wage spending; Re-regulation of finance; Planned trade; Broad-based incomes policy; Regulation of monopolistic pricing; Progressive Tax Reform; Technological Change and La-

bour Retraining; Selective Public Ownership; Industrial Democracy; National and regional economic planning.

The likely impacts of these policies are discussed from the point of view of the ALP, the response of the state and capital nationally and internationally.

A discussion is also developed about the political process involved in an alternative strategy which avoids statism, links up with the ALP Left and involves the broad social movements. Popular support is crucial to advance the strategy and to defend it from the inevitable responses of capital; a continuous process of interaction between struggles of workers and community groups in which the alternative plays in the first instance an important ideological role is sketched.

This is a valuable essay on a subject which many on the Left feel has overwhelmed them; on the one hand the dismal rhetoric of the "tomato" left leaves them cold while the ACTU's successes in arbitration do little for union activity and understanding. Other sections of the union movement unashamedly opt for corporatism.

Union membership decline tells the ultimate story of the workforce's judgement.

Copies of the article can be obtained from the conveners of the Industrial/Economic Commission at the NSW office or the NLP PO Box contact in Melbourne.

by Rob Durbridge

What women want in the workplace

For many women workers, the meaning and significance of award restructuring has been shrouded by jargon and obscured by the rituals of the power players in the industrial relations boys club.

In an attempt to demystify the topic and help place women's interests on to the restructuring agenda, the Women's Commission in Melbourne held a seminar which was attended by more than 40 women from diverse working backgrounds.

Martina Nightingale, a union education officer, introduced the session by outlining

the employers' agenda for award restructuring. After a general discussion the meeting came up with some perceived advantages and disadvantages for women under the union movement's agenda for award restructuring. It was noted that the need for childcare and flexibility of working hours had not been put on the unions' agenda. It was suggested they be placed on a strategy list.

Advantages of Award Restructuring

- Structural barriers on agenda.
- Wage increases for low paid workers

- Potential to change relativities for women.
- Training and career structures on agenda
- Accrediting women's skills eg. clerical work/keyboard.
- Recognition of informal training
- Recognition of experience

Implications for women

- Some unions won't apply any creative thought to restructuring
- lack of access for women to negotiations
- narrow craft interests
- part-time/casual/outwork
- training should be educational rather than narrowly skills oriented.